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*STOKE POGIS CHURCH*

# English and American Literature

A COURSE OF STUDY IN LITERARY INTERPRE-  
TATION AND HISTORY, WITH APPLIED  
METHODS OF TEACHING READ-  
ING AND LITERATURE

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*Including Numerous Masterpieces*

VOLUME V, LYRICS

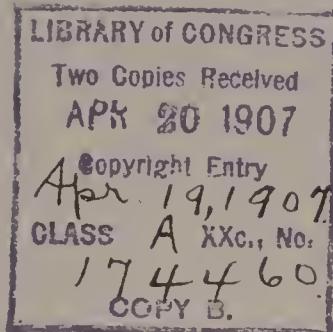


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Lyric Poetry

(Continued)



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## Elegies



## Elegies

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A mournful song, in stately measure, praising the dead for his virtues, full of the grief that remains with the living, believing in the happiness of the departed and hoping for a blessed reunion in the hereafter, this is the typical elegy. On the one side it shades off into the ode, some poems being susceptible of classification in both groups; on the other it may take the form of sonnets, many of which answer every requirement of the dirge. Many poems are therefore elegiacal that are not strictly elegies. A rigid classification is never necessary but an association of these beautiful pieces, all thoroughly impregnated with the personal grief of the author, gives to each a greater power, a more thrilling significance. They arise from the deepest emotion and so are the offspring of divinest inspiration; love is in the heart of the writer and so the flight of song is best sustained; they are intended to show to the world respect and admiration for the one whose virtues they celebrate and so they are refined and polished to the last degree. Where grief, love and a hope to give earthly immortality to the object of his affection move the poet, we expect the finest efforts of his genius and we are not disappointed.

## Elegies

These elegies include some of the grandest, the most perfect productions of poetic skill.

When man sees his loved one laid away forever, he naturally longs to preserve the memory of the departed to succeeding generations, to erect some permanent memorial. Funereal monuments are characteristic of every race and have proved the most enduring records of the past. The inscriptions upon these tombs are early records of the elegiac spirit.

The epitaph is elegy in miniature. "To define an epitaph is useless; everyone knows it is an inscription on a tomb. An *epitaph* is indeed commonly panegyrical, because we are seldom distinguished by a stone but by our friends," says Dr. Johnson.

This epitaph was written by Robert Wilde in the seventeenth century:

Here lies a piece of Christ; a star in dust;  
A vein of gold; a china dish that must  
Be used in heaven, when God shall feast the  
just.

The two epitaphs from Ben Jonson given next are well known and often alluded to.

## On Elizabeth L. H.

---

Wouldst thou hear what man can say  
In a little? Reader, stay.

Underneath this stone doth lie  
As much beauty as could die:  
Which in life did harbour give  
To more virtue than doth live.  
If at all she had a fault,  
Leave it buried in this vault.  
One name was Elizabeth,  
The other, let it sleep with death:  
Fitter, when it died, to tell,  
Than that it lived at all. Farewell!

## Epitaph on the Countess of Pem- broke

---

Underneath this sable hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse,  
SIDNEY's sister, PEMBROKE's mother;  
Death! ere thou hast slain another,  
Learned and fair, and good as she,  
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

## Elegies

The number of elegiacal poems is very large and the student will be able to add many to the few here given. This *Soldiers' Dirge* by William Collins (1721-1756) is in dainty verse and notable for the poetic imagery and the suggestive pictures.

### Soldiers' Dirge

---

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest  
By all their country's wishes blest !  
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallow'd mold,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:  
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;  
And Freedom shall awhile repair,  
To dwell a weeping hermit there.

## Bereavement

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove;  
A maid whom there were none to praise,  
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half-hidden from the eye !  
— Fair as a star, when only one  
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, and O !  
The difference to me !

## Mary

CHARLES WOLFE

If I had thought thou could'st have died,  
I might not weep for thee;  
But I forgot, when by thy side,  
That thou could'st mortal be.  
It never through my mind had passed  
That time would e'er be o'er,

## Elegies

And I on thee should look my last,  
And thou should'st smile no more !

And still upon that face I look,  
And think 'twill smile again;  
And still the thought I will not brook  
That I must look in vain.  
But when I speak thou dost not say,  
What thou ne'er left'st unsaid;  
And now I feel, as well I may,  
Sweet Mary, thou art dead !

If thou would'st stay, e'en as thou art,  
All cold, and all serene —  
I still might press thy silent heart,  
And where thy smiles have been !  
While e'en thy chill, bleak corse I have,  
Thou seemest still mine own;  
But there — I lay thee in thy grave,  
And I am now alone !

I do not think, where'er thou art,  
Thou hast forgotten me;  
And I, perhaps, may soothe this heart,  
In thinking still of thee:  
Yet there was round thee such a dawn  
Of light ne'er seen before,  
As fancy never could have drawn,  
And never can restore !

## Elegy

*Written in a Country Churchyard*

One hundred years after the death of Shakespeare there was born a poet whose fame is almost as firmly established as that of the great dramatist. His reputation, moreover, rests almost wholly upon a single poem, the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, a few verses containing more noble thoughts expressed in more perfect rhythm than are found in many a longer poem. The pains taken in composing this touching elegy which it took him eight years to finish were characteristic of the author. He was a small, handsome man, of somewhat effeminate appearance, carefully dressed and fastidious to a degree. He was born in 1716, received his education at Cambridge and traveled on the continent with the son of Sir Horace Walpole. He spent most of his life at Cambridge and devoted his time to study. Next to Milton he is said to have been the most learned of all the great writers. His poems are few in number but each one was written and polished with extreme care. His *Ode to Spring*, *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and *A Hymn to Adversity*, are his only well-known poems. He declined the honor of poet laureate

## Thomas Gray

of Great Britain, but afterward accepted the chair of modern history at Cambridge. He died in 1771.

Hardly any other poem in the English language is so well known as is Gray's remarkable *Elegy*. It is a creation that speaks directly to the heart universal, that deals with the emotions common to every human being and depicts those emotions in words every person can understand, to the music of a verse as thoroughly in harmony with the subject as is the atmosphere of the poem.

On a calm summer's evening he seats himself in the yard of the quaint little church of Stoke Pogis. Around him is the beautiful landscape of an English park; great shade trees offer shelter in pastures where cattle graze unmolested. Windsor and Eton are far away and the pensive poet is alone with nature and the dead. At once he begins to create for us the atmosphere of the place, the beauty and the peace that lend enchantment to the hour and lull our spirits into the mood for the quiet contemplation he desires. The curfew rings, the herd winds by, the ploughman nods goodbye and darkness falls around us. As we read the lines we feel the darkness coming on, no matter where we are. The glimmering landscape disappears, our cares fly away and we hear the sleepy droning of the beetle and the tinkle of bells in the distant folds. Over there in the square tower the owl, so rarely molested in this quiet spot, wonders at our intrusion and complains to the moon

## Thomas Gray

of our disturbing presence. With what art has all this been done! In twelve short lines Gray has prepared the way so that his quiet meditations shall be received by us and held for thought. We yield ourselves to their influence. The only way one can read and get for himself the best a poem has is to yield himself to the sensuous music of the lines and let his imagination run riot with the details of a scene suggested merely. In what direction will the poet's thoughts tend? In the little church are some rather stately monuments, at least some that indicate position, wealth, and possible refinement. Will these touch his imagination, will these form the subject of his reflection? No, his thoughts are with the people, the substratum upon which society is built, the poor whom we have always with us. It is not within the English church, filled with local pride, where relatives vie with each other in elaborate memorials which have their changing styles as the years move on, but it is outside underneath the ever-present trees, among the moldering heaps, that may everywhere roughen the surface of the universal tomb of man that Gray finds his inspiration. And as for so many of us the turf somewhere heaves, as for most of us some dear one lies forever at rest in his narrow cell, we turn willingly from the pomp of mural tablet or sculptured bust to linger with the rude forefathers of the hamlet.

## Thomas Gray

With appropriate atmosphere around us and our sympathies enlisted for the people of whom he writes, the poet gives us glimpses of their life; the customary sounds of a rural morning, the evening pleasures, the daytime labors; none of these shall move them more.

Acquainted now with the class of people whose virtues the poet is to sing, we are in the mood for his protest against the ambition which would view with contempt their simple life, or the wealth so proud of its own display as to look with scorn on the poor and humble.

The next stanza is one of those general statements, those gems of thought which so often sparkle as a bright stone in appropriate setting. The titled noble, the powerful of earth, the most beautiful person, the wealthiest, all must die. Such the thought: "All that live will share thy fate." It is a thought we all have had repeatedly, but who ever clothed it in such fitting words?

Returning to the special subject of his contemplation, he deprecates in the proud any feeling that blame should rest upon these poor for having no memorial in the aisles of some great cathedral, for no urn inscribed with the story of the dead, no bust so beautiful as to seem endowed with life, no honor however great, no flattery however sincere can call life back, can "soothe the dull, cold ear of Death." And moreover in this neglected

## Thomas Gray

graveyard are perhaps some who might have written inspired poetry, or ruled kingdoms, if they could have been educated and had not been repressed by the stupefying influence of poverty.

Then we are given another stanza of application as wide as the world, a generalization as beautiful as the language can make it. Placed naturally in the poem the stanza is complete and perfect in itself, another gracefully figurative expression of a well-known truth. This makes it the frequently quoted stanza it is. But there is no break in the unity of thought, for the very next stanza calls to our minds the fact that some villager now lying before us may have withstood the oppression of some titled landlord with the same fearlessness that John Hampden withstood the tyrannical measures of Charles I of England, or that here may be a soul as keenly attuned to the music of poetry as was Milton's, some person as roughly and sturdily powerful as the famous Cromwell who overthrew Charles I and established the Protectorate.

Their lot forbade all these things, forbade them to gain honor in the senate, to despise threats of pain and ruin, to make the land prosperous, to find fame in the national house. But though their lot was hard in this respect and gave them little opportunity for the exercise of their virtues it confined their vices and forbade the hideous slaughter of him who seeks to conquer a kingdom;

## Thomas Gray

it forbade them to hide the truth they knew, to control the blush which marked their frank shame and to sell their talents to the wealthy and the proud, as many a famous poet has done. Their real condition and character are indicated in the apt phrases of the next stanza: *The madding crowd's ignoble strife, their sober wishes, the cool sequestered vale, the noiseless tenor of their way.*

After three stanzas descriptive of the pathetic memorial of unlettered grief, Gray gives another truth known to man wherever he breathes—the hesitation to face death, the longing for companionship even through the valley of the shadow.

Now addressing us directly or at least calling upon some kindred spirit, he looks forward to his own death and burial. Should we ask for the thoughtful man, the meditative genius who wrote the artful, artless tale, some old patriarch of the region may tell us how he had seen the poet wandering solitary and alone in the early morning or resting wearily at noon tide, or conning over his melancholy lines, hopeless and forlorn; how he had missed him one day and another and then how with solemn dirges he had seen him borne to the quiet spot where now in fact the poet Gray reposes.

The epitaph the poet writes for himself follows; we may instinctively feel the sensitive soul, deprecating criticism, anxious to please but with-

## Thomas Gray

out confidence in himself. He lacked sympathy from his contemporaries and his lofty character suffered from lack of genial atmosphere and friendly appreciation.

“Had Gray written nothing but his *Elegy*, high as he stands, I am not sure that he would not stand higher; it is the corner-stone of his glory. . . . Gray’s *Elegy* pleased instantly and eternally.”

—Lord Byron.

“Gray’s *Elegy* owes much of its popularity to its strain of verse; the strain of thought alone, natural and touching as it is, would never have impressed it upon the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands unless the diction and meter in which it was embodied had been perfectly in unison with it. Beattie ascribed its general reception to both causes. Neither cause would have sufficed for producing so general and extensive and permanent an effect unless the poem had been, in the full import of the word, harmonious.”

—Southey.

“The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning ‘Yet even these bones’ are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus it would have been vain to blame and useless to praise him.”

—Johnson.

## Elegy

*Written in a Country Churchyard*

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,

And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower  
The moping owl does to the moon complain

Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,

Where heaves the turf in many a mold-ring heap,

Each in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

### Gray's Elegy

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
How jocund did they drive their team a-field!  
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,

## Gray's Elegy

Await alike the inevitable hour:—  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.<sup>1</sup>

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,  
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
Where, through the long-drawn aisle and  
fretted vault,  
The pealing anthem swells the note of  
praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of  
Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial  
fire;

---

1. The following from Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* gives an interesting anecdote of General Wolfe on his night expedition to storm the Heights of Abraham:

"For full two hours the procession of boats, borne on the current, steered silently down the St. Lawrence. The stars were visible, but the night was moonless and sufficiently dark. The general was in one of the foremost boats, and near him was a young midshipman, John Robison, afterward professor of natural history in the University of Edinburgh. He used to tell in his later life how Wolfe, with a low voice, repeated *Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard* to the officers with him. Probably it was to relieve the intense strain of his thoughts. Among the rest was the verse which his own fate was soon to illustrate.

"*The paths of glory lead but to the grave.* 'Gentlemen,' he said, as his recital ended, 'I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec.' None were there, to tell him that the hero is greater than the poet."

### Gray's Elegy

Hands that the rod of empire might have  
swayed,  
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er  
unroll:

Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless  
breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,  
Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest —  
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's  
blood.

Th' applause of listening senates to command,  
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

## Gray's Elegy

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone  
Their growing virtues, but their crimes con-  
fined;

Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to  
hide,

To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,  
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect,  
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture  
decked,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlet-  
tered Muse,  
The place of fame and elegy supply;  
And many a holy text around she strews,  
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

## Gray's Elegy

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries;  
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonored dead,  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,  
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,  
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,  
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of  
dawn,  
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,  
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so  
high,  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that bubbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies, he would  
rove;

### Gray's Elegy

Now drooping, woful-wan, like one forlorn,  
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

“One morn I missed him from the customed hill,  
Along the heath, and near his fav'rite tree.  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

“The next, with dirges due, in sad array,  
Slow through the churchway path we saw  
him borne,—

Approach and read, for thou canst read, the  
lay  
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.

“There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,  
By hands unseen are showers of violets found;  
The red-breast loves to build and warble there,  
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.”

### THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,  
A youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown:



GRAY'S MONUMENT



### Gray's Elegy

Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,  
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;  
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:  
He gave to Misery (all he had) a tear,  
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)  
a friend.

No further seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.

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NOTE.—The stanza preceding the Epitaph was omitted from the final revision of the poem.

## Threnodia

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Gone, gone from us ! and shall we see  
Those sibyl-leaves of destiny,  
Those calm eyes, nevermore ?  
Those deep, dark eyes so warm and bright,  
Wherein the fortunes of the man  
Lay slumbering in prophetic light,  
In characters a child might scan ?  
So bright, and gone forth utterly ?  
O stern word.— Nevermore !

The stars of those two gentle eyes  
Will shine no more on earth;  
Quenched are the hopes that had their birth,  
As we watched them slowly rise,  
Stars of a mother's fate;  
And she would read them o'er and o'er,  
Pondering, as she sate,  
Over their dear astrology,  
Which she had conned and conned before,  
Deeming she needs must read aright  
What was writ so passing bright.  
And yet, alas ! she knew not why,  
Her voice would falter in its song,  
And tears would slide from out her eye,

## Tbrenodia

Silent, as they were doing wrong.  
Her heart was like a wind-flower, bent  
Even to breaking with the balmy dew,  
Turning its heavenly nourishment  
(That filled with tears its eyes of blue,  
Like a sweet suppliant that weeps in prayer,  
Making her innocence show more fair,  
Albeit unwitting of the ornament,) )  
Into a load too great for it to bear:  
O stern word — Nevermore !

The tongue, that scarce had learned to claim  
An entrance to a mother's heart  
By that dear talisman, a mother's name,  
Sleeps all forgetful of its art !  
I loved to see the infant soul  
(How mighty in the weakness  
Of its untutored meekness !)  
Peep timidly from out its nest,  
His lips, the while,  
Fluttering with half-fledged words,  
Or hushing to a smile  
That more than words expressed,  
When his glad mother on him stole  
And snatched him to her breast !  
O, thoughts were brooding in those eyes,  
That would have soared like strong-winged  
birds

## Tbrenodia

Far, far into the skies,  
Gladding the earth with song  
And gushing harmonies,  
Had he but tarried with us long !  
O stern word — Nevermore !

How peacefully they rest,  
Crossfolded there  
Upon his little breast,  
Those small, white hands that ne'er were  
still before,  
But ever sported with his mother's hair,  
Or the plain cross that on her breast she  
wore !

Her heart no more will beat  
To feel the touch of that soft palm,  
That ever seemed a new surprise  
Sending glad thoughts up to her eyes  
To bless him with their holy calm,—  
Sweet thoughts ! they made her eyes as sweet.

How quiet are the hands  
That wove those pleasant bands !  
But that they do not rise and sink  
With his calm breathing, I should think  
That he were dropped asleep.

Alas ! too deep, too deep  
Is this his slumber !

Time scarce can number

## Tbrenodia

The years ere he shall wake again —  
O, may we see his eyelids open then !  
O stern word — Nevermore !

As the airy gossamere,  
Floating in the sunlight clear,  
Where'er it toucheth clingeth tightly  
Round glossy leaf or stump unsightly,  
So from his spirit wandered out  
Tendrils spreading all about,  
Knitting all things to its thrall  
With a perfect love of all:  
O stern word — Nevermore !

He did but float a little way  
Adown the stream of time,  
With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play,  
Or hearkening to their fairy chime;  
His slender sail  
Ne'er felt the gale;  
He did but float a little way,  
And, putting to the shore  
While yet 'twas early day,  
Went calmly on his way,  
To dwell with us no more !  
No jarring did he feel,  
No grating on his shallop's keel;  
A strip of silver sand

## Tbrenodia

Mingled the waters with the land  
Where he was seen no more:  
O stern word — Nevermore !

Full short his journey was; no dust  
Of earth unto his sandals clave;  
The weary weight that old men must,  
He bore not to the grave.  
He seemed a cherub who had lost his way  
And wandered hither, so his stay  
With us was short, and 'twas most meet  
That he should be no delver in Earth's clod,  
Nor need to pause and cleanse his feet  
To stand before his God;  
O blest word — Evermore !

## Studies

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A running commentary accompanied Gray's *Elegy*. In the study of this poem, you are left to make your own interpretation but the following questions will assist you. Read the poem and then, question by question, go through these studies. Do not neglect any. Find some satisfactory answer to every one. Some are questions of fact. To these, accurate answers are necessary. Others are matters of opinion. Your opinions must satisfy yourself and should of course be formed from reason. Satisfy *yourself* that you have a reasonable answer to every question or that the question itself is unreasonable, before you leave the poem. Then as a final act read the poem from beginning to end aloud, to some person if possible.

How many feet in the longest line? In the shortest? How many different measures in the poem? What is the verse? Do the short lines occur at regular intervals? Are the stanzas uniform in length? Uniform in structure? Can you see any regularity in the general structure of the poem? Is there a refrain? Does it add to the beauty of the poem? What evidences can you find that the poet followed an established plan in his composition? What are the *sibyl leaves of*

## Studies

*destiny?* What is the figurative significance of the phrase? Is force given to the idea by the clause *which a child might scan?*

How are the gentle eyes *stars of a mother's fate?* What is meant by *their dear astrology?* Why should the mother's voice falter, why should tears slide from out her eye? Why should they be silent? In what way could they do wrong?

What is the *wind-flower?* In what respect was her heart like a wind-flower? What was the balmy dew that could bend her heart even to breaking? What was the heavenly nourishment that was turned into so great a load? What connection have the words in the parentheses with the remainder of the sentence? What is the antecedent of *that*, first word in parentheses? What makes the innocence of the suppliant appear more fair? What was the ornament? Is it a premonition of the child's death that makes the mother sad?

What is a talisman? What was the child's talisman? How old a child was it? How could a child be mighty in weakness? What is alluded to in the figure when he sees *the infant soul peep timidly from out its nest?*

Is the poet still thinking of the same comparison when he speaks of the fluttering of half-fledged words? Is it a fine comparison to liken the hesitating speech of a child to the fluttering of half-fledged birdlings? Thoughts were brooding

## Studies

in whose eyes? Is the same figure continued in these lines? What future is seen for the child in the lines *gladding the earth with song and gushing harmonies*? What relation does the poet bear to the child?

To what is the first stanza devoted? To what features of the child is the second given? The third? The fourth? What were the glad sweet thoughts the little, sporting hands sent up to the mother's eyes? What were the bands the small hand wove? What are they that do not rise and sink with his calm breathing; what is indicated by this? What is meant by his waking again? Does the last line of the stanza mean that the poet does not expect to see those eyelids open then?

What is the gossamere? Have you seen it, dew-covered some bright morning, clinging round a glossy leaf or unsightly stump? Is the figure beautiful that compares the babe's heart-tendrils to these airy gossameres? Is gossameres a pretty word? Have you seen it before, "restless gossameres"?

Is it an apt figure to liken the infant to a little boat floating down the stream of time? To whose fairy chime did he listen? Are these lines harmonious: "With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play, or listening to their fairy chime"? Can you improve upon them by changing the order or substituting different words? Is slender an appro-

## Studies

priate adjective to apply to his sail? What is meant by saying that his sail *never felt the gale*? How did he *put to the shore*? What is the significance of *while yet 'twas early day*? Did the child suffer as he died? Did he die peacefully? How do you know? What is the significance of the *strip of silver sand* that *mingled the waters with the land*? Why *silver* sand? Is the stanza musical? Read it aloud, gently. Is it not a charming figure for the brief life and sweet death of a lovely infant?

To what is his life compared in the last stanza? What is meant by saying that *no dust clave to his sandals*? Why sandals instead of shoes or slippers? Of what word is *weight* the subject? What is meant by *'twas most meet*? Is *delver in Earth's clod* to be taken literally? Why the somewhat forced use of the word *clod*? Why not *soil*? Is there an allusion to any custom in the phrase *pause and cleanse thy feet*? What has been the last line in every preceding stanza? Do you see any reason for the change?

Does the elegy have a unity of thought throughout? Does the feeling rise regularly to the end? Which stanza is the most beautiful? Which the most pathetic? Which shows most deeply the mother's grief? Which most pathetically the loss to everyone? Which most vividly the beauty of the babe? What is there in the poem for a person not interested in this particular child? Is

## Studies

the experience of the parents a common one? Is there anything exceptional in the facts of the poem? Would you from choice read the poem again? Can you imagine circumstances under which it might appeal more strongly to you?

## In Memoriam

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Arthur Henry Hallam was the eldest son of the great historian. He was two years younger than Tennyson and gifted with a genius that promised to rival the great poet himself. The two were educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and developed a warm and intimate friendship. The families were also intimate and Hallam was engaged to be married to Tennyson's sister. In 1833 when Hallam was twenty-two years of age, he went abroad for his health, his father accompanying him. At Vienna he caught a slight cold which brought on an attack of intermittent fever that did not appear to be alarming, but a sudden congestion of the brain set in and the young man died very suddenly. His body was brought back to England and buried at Clevedon church.

*In Memoriam* is a series of lyrics of uniform meter, all dealing with different phases of the poet's grief for his friend, and together making the noblest elegy in the language. The poems were written at different times and were gathered together and published in their present form in 1850.

This elegy was not at first received everywhere with approval, but it has gradually established itself as Tennyson's masterpiece and is now gener-



*ALFRED TENNYSON*



## In Memoriam

ally recognized as of surpassing power. As a type of the unfavorable criticism with which the work was met, this is offered from Charlotte Bronté: "I have read Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or, rather, part of it; I closed the book when I had got about half way. It is beautiful, it is mournful, it is monotonous. Many of the feelings expressed bear in their utterance the stamp of truth; yet if Arthur Hallam had been somewhat nearer Tennyson—his brother instead of his friend—I should have distrusted this measured and printed movement of grief."

Another, in a different vein is from the pen of H. A. Taine: "His long poem *In Memoriam*, written in praise and memory of a friend who died young, is cold, monotonous, and too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning, but like a correct gentleman, with brand-new gloves, wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief, and displays throughout the religious service which ends the ceremony, all the compunction of a respectful and well-trained layman."

On the other hand here are opinions that do away with the superficial criticisms just quoted and demonstrate the strong qualities of the production, its lyric beauty, its idealization of love, its moral grandeur:

"His friend is nowhere in his sight, and God is silent. Death, God's final compulsion to prayer, in its dread, its gloom, its utter stillness, its ap-

## In Memoriam

parent nothingness, urges the cry. Moanings over the dead are mingled with the profoundest questionings of philosophy, the signs of nature, and the story of Jesus, while now and then the star of the morning, bright Phosphor, flashes a few rays through the shifting, cloudy darkness. And if the sun has not arisen on the close of the book, yet the aurora of the coming dawn gives light enough to make the onward journey possible and hopeful.”

— George MacDonald.

“At the age of forty a man blessed with a sound mind in a sound body should reach the maturity of his intellectual power. At such a period Tennyson produced *In Memoriam*, his most characteristic and significant work. In it are concentrated his wisest reflections upon life, death, and immortality, the worlds within and without; while the whole song is so largely uttered, and so pervaded with the singer’s manner that any isolated line is recognized at once. This work stands by itself; none can essay another upon its model without yielding every claim to personality, and at the risk of inferiority that would be appalling.

“The strength of Tennyson’s intellect has full sweep in this elegiac poem—the great threnody of our language, by virtue of unique conception and power. *Lycidas*, with its primrose beauty and varied lofty flights is but the extension of a theme set by Moschus and Bion. Shelley, in

## In Memoriam

*Adonais*, despite his spiritual ecstasy and splendor of lament, followed the same masters — yes, and took his landscape and imagery from distant climes. Swinburne's dirge for Baudelaire is a wonder of melody; nor do we forget the *Thyrsis* of Arnold, and other modern adventures in a direction where the sweet and absolute solemnity of the Saxon tongue is most apparent. Still, as an original and intellectual production, *In Memoriam* is beyond them all and a more important though possibly no more enduring creation of rhythmic art. The metrical form of this work deserves attention. The author's choice of transposed quatrain verse was a piece of good fortune. Its hymnal quality, finely exemplified in the opening prayer, is always impressive, and although a monotone, no more monotonous than the sounds of nature — the murmur of the ocean, the soughing of the mountain pines. Were *In Memoriam* written in direct quatrains, I think the effect would be unendurable. The work as a whole is built up of successive lyrics, each expressing a single phase of the poet's sorrow-brooding thought; and here again is followed the method of nature, which evolves cell after cell, and joining each to each constructs the sentient organization. But Tennyson's art instincts are always perfect; he does the fitting thing, and rarely seeks, through eccentric and curious movements, to attract the popular regard. As to scenery, imagery, and

## In Memoriam

general treatment, *In Memoriam* is eminently a British poem. The grave, majestic, hymnal measure swells like the peal of an organ, yet acts as a brake on undue spasmodic outbursts of discordant grief.”

—E. C. Stedman.

“The greatest poem, all things considered, that Tennyson ever wrote is *In Memoriam*. Its name indicates one of the most difficult efforts which can be made in Literature. It aims at embalming a private sorrow for everlasting remembrance, at rendering a personal grief generally and immortally interesting. The set eye, the marble brow of stoicism would cast back human sympathy ; the broken accents and convulsive weeping of individual affliction would awaken no nobler emotion than mere pity ; it was sorrow in a calm and stately attitude, robed in angel-like beauty, though retaining a look of earnest, endless sadness that would draw generation after generation to the house of mourning. No poet save one possessed not only of commanding genius, but of peculiar qualifications for the task, could have attempted to delineate a sorrow like this. The genius of Tennyson found in the work its precise and most congenial employment ; and the result is surely *the finest elegiac poem in the world.*”

—Peter Bayne.

“Everything reminds him of the dead. Every joy or sorrow of man, every aspect of nature, from—

## In Memoriam

The forest cracked, the waters curl'd;  
The cattle huddled on the lea,  
The thousand waves of wheat  
That ripple round the lonely grange.

In every place where in old days they had met and conversed; in every dark wrestling of the spirit with the doubts and fears of manhood, throughout the whole outward universe of nature, and the whole inward universe of spirit, the soul of his dead friend broods, at first a memory shrouded in blank despair, then a living presence, a ministering spirit, answering doubts, calming fears, stirring up noble aspirations, utter humility, leading the poet upward step by step to faith and peace and hope. Not that there runs throughout the book a conscious or organic method. The poems seem often to be united merely by the identity of their meter, so exquisitely chosen, that while the major rhyme in the second and third lines of each stanza gives the solidity and self-restraint required by such deep themes, the mournful minor rhyme of each first and fourth line always leads the ear to expect something beyond, and enables the poet's thoughts to wander sadly on from stanza to stanza and poem to poem, in an endless chain of —

Linked sweetness long drawn out.

There are records of risings and fallings again, of alternate cloud and sunshine throughout the book

## In Memoriam

—earnest and passionate records yet never bitter; humble, yet never abject; with a depth and vehemence of affection ‘passing the love of woman,’ yet without a taint of sentimentality; self-restrained and dignified, without even narrowing into artificial coldness — altogether rivalling the sonnets of Shakespeare. Why should we not say boldly surpassing — for the sake of the superior faith into which it rises, for the sake of the poem at the opening of the volume — in our eyes, the noblest Christian poem which several centuries have seen?”

— Charles Kingsley.

*In Memoriam* is so long that it could not be published entire in this volume, but enough is printed to give a comprehensive idea and, it is hoped, to create a desire to read all the lyrics. The thread of continuity between the different sections is not materially injured by the omissions, for the parts are not intimately connected. Critics differ in the classification they make and the grouping of the lyrics often varies materially. But it is not difficult to trace the general trend of thought, however great the difference of interpretation in specific instances. The numbering of the lyrics has been preserved that the student may take note of the omissions. Running with the text is a series of comments giving in general terms a brief outline of the thought and an indication of the classification made in Davidson’s *Prolegomena to In*

## In Memoriam

*Memoriam*, published by D. C. Heath & Co. Davidson says that the fundamental thought of *In Memoriam* is, "Man's true happiness consists in the perfect conformity of his will to the divine will, and this conformity is attained through love first of man and then of God."

## In Memoriam

ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

Strong Son of God, immortal Love  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we can not prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;  
Thou madest Life in man and brute;  
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot  
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:  
Thou madest man, he knows not why;  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours to make them thine.

### In Memoriam

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we can not know:  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell:  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;  
We mock thee when we do not fear:  
But help thy foolish ones to bear;  
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me;  
What seemed my worth since I began;  
For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

## In Memoriam

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

This invocation to Immortal Love, the Strong Son of God, which serves as an introduction and prologue, was not written until 1849, and so may be considered as a summing up, as the conclusion of the whole matter.

### I.

I held it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years  
And find in loss a gain to match?  
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch  
The far-off interest of tears?

### In Memoriam

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,  
Let darkness keep her raven gloss:  
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,  
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn  
The long result of love, and boast,  
“Behold the man that loved and lost,  
But all he was is overworn.”

Lyric II is an address to the yew tree, which is usually found in English graveyards and seems to Tennyson symbolic of his own overpowering grief; III is a direct address to Sorrow and raises the question whether he shall submit all to her; in IV Grief follows him even to the land of sleep and wakes his will to mourn no more; in V he fears the expression of his grief is sinful, but finally decides to wrap himself in words like mourner's weeds, that show but the bare outline of his great grief.

### VI.

One writes, that “Other friends remain,”  
That “Loss is common to the race,”—  
And common is the commonplace,  
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.  
That loss is common would not make  
My own less bitter, rather more:

## In Memoriam

Too common ! Never morning wore  
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,  
Who pledgest now thy gallant son;  
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,  
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save  
Thy sailor, — while thy head is bowed,  
His heavy-shotted hammock shroud,  
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought  
At that last hour to please him well ;  
Who mused on all I had to tell,  
And something written, something thought ;

Expecting still his advent home ;  
And ever met him on his way  
With wishes, thinking, here to-day,  
Or here to-morrow will he come.

Oh, somewhere, meek unconscious dove,  
That sittest ranging golden hair;  
And glad to find thyself so fair,  
Poor child, that waitest for thy love !

### In Memoriam

For now her father's chimney glows  
In expectation of a guest ;  
And thinking, "This will please him best,"  
She takes a ribbon or a rose ;

For he will see them on to-night ;  
And with the thought her color burns ;  
And having left the glass, she turns  
Once more to set a ringlet right ;

And, even when she turned, the curse  
Had fallen, and her future lord  
Was drowned in passing thro' the ford,  
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end ?  
And what to me remains of good ?  
To her, perpetual maidenhood,  
And unto me no second friend.

In VII and VIII everything reminds him of his friend and he continues to indulge himself in his melancholy and decides, since his poetry had pleased Hallam, to plant this flower upon his grave. This may be considered a first section of the elegy though the division is arbitrary, none showing in the published collection.

The next section extending to and including the Twenty-first lyric is devoted to the death of his

## In Memoriam

friend, his return by ship and his burial in England. Two numbers are an address to the fair ship that brings the body and which the poet hopes may bear the dear burden safely home to us who deem that, than being engulfed at sea it is sweeter far

“To rest beneath the clover sod,  
That takes the sunshine and the rains,  
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains  
The chalice of the grapes of God.”

### XI.

Calm is the morn without a sound,  
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
And only thro’ the faded leaf  
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery gossamers  
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain  
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,  
And crowded farms and lessening towers,  
To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,  
These leaves that reddens to the fall;

## In Memoriam

And in my heart, if calm at all,  
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,  
And waves that sway themselves in rest,  
And dead calm in that noble breast  
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

The soul of the poet seems to mount and fly till it reaches the ship and lingers to ask, Is this the end of all my care? He asks Time to teach him the real truth, that he does not suffer in a dream; he can not realize his loss and feels that should he meet the vessel and find his friend alive he would not be surprised.

### XV.

To-night the winds begin to rise  
And roar from yonder dropping day;  
The last red leaf is whirled away,  
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,  
The cattle huddled on the lea;  
And wildly dashed on tower and tree  
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver  
That all thy motions gently pass

## In Memoriam

Athwart a plane of molten glass,  
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;  
And but for fear it is not so,  
The wild unrest that lives in woe  
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,  
And onward drags a laboring breast,  
And topples round the dreary west,  
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

Hallam's body reaches home and

'T is well; 't is something; we may stand  
Where he in English earth is laid,  
And from his ashes may be made  
The violet of his native land."

The Danube has given the body to the Severn,  
near which Clevedon church is located and there  
as twice a day the salt tide ebbs and flows, so his  
grief is hushed or vocal.

### XX.

The lesser griefs that may be said,  
That breathe a thousand tender vows,  
Are but as servants in a house  
Where lies the master newly dead;

## In Memoriam

Who speak their feeling as it is,  
And weep the fullness from the mind:  
"It will be hard," they say, "to find  
Another service such as this."

My lighter moods are like to these,  
That out of words a comfort win;  
But there are other griefs within,  
And tears that at their fountain freeze.

For by the hearth the children sit  
Cold in the atmosphere of Death,  
And scarce endure to draw the breath,  
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,  
So much the vital spirits sink  
To see the vacant chair, and think,  
"How good! how kind! and he is gone."

In the last poem of this section the poet imagines the criticisms the people will make on his overpowering grief and answers that he sings because he must and as the linnets do, one gay because her young have flown, the other sad because her young are stolen.

Numbers XXII to XXVIII inclusive are an expression of friendship for the dead, the reality and blessedness of which will endure in spite of time and change.

## In Memoriam

### XXVI.

Still onward winds the dreary way;  
I with it; for I long to prove  
No lapse of moons can canker Love,  
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt  
And goodness, and hath power to see  
Within the green the mouldered tree,  
And towers fall'n as soon as built —

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee  
Or see (in Him is no before)  
In more of life true life no more,  
And love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn  
Breaks hither over Indian seas,  
That Shadow waiting with the keys,  
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

### XXVII.

I envy not in any moods  
The captive void of noble rage,  
The linnet born within the cage,  
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes  
His license in the field of time,

## In Memoriam

Unfettered by the sense of crime,  
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,  
The heart that never plighted troth,  
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;  
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;  
I feel it, when I sorrow most;  
'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.

Beginning with section XXVIII and terminating with XXXVII are poems which turn from the past to the future, which treat of the immortality of the soul and find hope confirmed by revelation. It is Christmas time and three poems are given to that season, its happy associations and the deep sense of personal affliction that tempers its joy; but joy it is, for the dead do not change to us nor lose their mortal sympathy. Then the resurrection of Lazarus gives no reply to the question, "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?"

### XXXII.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
Nor other thought her mind admits  
But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
And he that brought him back is there.

## In Memoriam

Then one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face,  
And rests upon the life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,  
Borne down by gladness so complete,  
She bows, she bathes the Savior's feet  
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,  
Whose loves in higher love endure;  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

### XXXIV.

My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,  
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks  
In some wild poet, when he works  
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?  
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose

## In Memoriam

Of things all mortal, or to use  
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

If a voice from the grave should say there is no life in the future yet would he keep love alive. But there must be an immortality, or love would be but a coarse appetite such as prompts the satyr to drunkenness. Though in manhood we see truths but darkly yet we bless the name of God who made them current coin: "Truth embodied in a tale shall enter lowly doors." When Urania, the heavenly Muse, reproves him for trespassing on holy ground, his own Muse excuses him for trying to soothe his aching heart in this tribute to human love.

A fifth division is recognized in poems XXX-VIII—XLVIII. When a soul desires to fully realize immortal life the human heart is not satisfied with the mere conviction that immortality is a fact. The desire is strong to hold communion with the departed. Sadness returns to the poet with the spring time but he feels that if the dead retain any consciousness of this life his lines will be not all ungrateful to his friend. Again the yew tree is introduced, this time to signify that

### In Memoriam

though his thoughts may brighten momentarily they are soon again tinged with gloom. When the bride leaves home she leaves grief behind her, goes to rear her family, to teach them, and to link the generations each to each; but she will return bringing her babe and the family will count new things dear as old; not so Hallam, who, though he fill "such great offices as suit the full-grown energies of heaven," will not return. Tennyson realizes that even here on earth, Hallam's genius was rising higher and higher and wishes that he might rush at once to his friend who, he fears, will advance beyond him in the other life so that Tennyson will no longer be his equal. He reproaches himself for this thought as Hallam was his superior even here and closes this lyric with the beautiful stanza :

" And what delights can equal those  
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,  
When one that loves but knows not,  
reaps  
A truth from one that loves and knows? "

### XLIII.

If Sleep and Death be truly one,  
And every spirit's folded bloom  
Thro' all its intervalt gloom  
In some long trance should slumber on;

## In Memoriam

Unconscious of the sliding hour,  
Bare of the body, might it last,  
And silent traces of the past  
Be all the color of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;  
So that still garden of the souls  
In many a figured leaf enrolls  
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole  
As when he loved me here in time,  
And at the spiritual prime  
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

How fares it with the dead? Does he "forget the days before God shut the doorways of his head"? Perhaps some mystic hint of this earth may reach him there and if so the poet hopes he will turn about and listen to the message that tells about the friends he left here. The babe is at first unconscious of himself and in the same way after our second birth we must establish our identity by means, possibly, of the blood and breath of this life.

### XLVI.

We ranging down this lower track,  
The path we came by, thorn and flower,

## In Memoriam

Is shadowed by the growing hour,  
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last  
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,  
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom  
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time revealed;  
The fruitful hours of still increase;  
Days ordered in a wealthy peace,  
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,  
A bounded field, nor stretching far;  
Look also, Love, a brooding star,  
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

He alludes to the doctrine that our soul may merge at death into the one general soul and that there may be no individual existence hereafter, but this he thinks "is faith as vague as all unsweet." He expects to meet Hallam again.

### XLVIII.

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,  
Were taken to be such as closed  
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,  
Then these were such as men might scorn:

## In Memoriam

Her care is not to part and prove;  
She takes, when harsher moods remit,  
What slender shade of doubt may flit,  
And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,  
But better serves a wholesome law,  
And holds it sin and shame to draw  
The deepest measure from the chords:

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,  
But rather loosens from the lip  
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip  
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

The sixth division begins with XLIX and contains more mysterious problems. Evil and death are considered, and the possible conflict of nature with faith.

### L.

Be near me when my light is low,  
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick  
And tingle; and the heart is sick,  
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame  
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;  
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,  
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

## In Memoriam

Be near me when my faith is dry,  
And men the flies of latter spring,  
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,  
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,  
To point the term of human strife,  
And on the low dark verge of life  
The twilight of eternal day.

### LI.

Do we indeed desire the dead  
Should still be near us at our side ?  
Is there no baseness we would hide ?  
No inner vileness that we dread ?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,  
I had such reverence for his blame,  
See with clear eye some hidden shame  
And I be lessened in his love ?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:  
Shall love be blamed for want of faith ?  
There must be wisdom with great Death:  
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:  
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours

## In Memoriam

With larger other eyes than ours,  
To make allowance for us all.

### LII.

I can not love thee as I ought,  
For love reflects the things beloved;  
My words are only words, and moved  
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

“Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,”  
The spirit of true love replied;  
“Thou canst not move me from thy side,  
Nor human frailty do me wrong.

“What keeps a spirit wholly true  
To that ideal which he bears ?  
What record ? not the sinless years  
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue:

“So fret not, like an idle girl,  
That life is dashed with flecks of sin.  
Abide: thy wealth is gathered in,  
When Time hath sundered shell from pearl.”

He has seen many a sober and sensible man whose youth was wild and reckless; if we thought this sowing of wild oats necessary to the development of the man would we preach the doctrine to the young? No.

## In Memoriam

“ Hold thou the good: define it well:  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark, and be  
Procuress to the lords of Hell.”

### LIV.

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last — far off — at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I ?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An infant crying for the light:  
And with no language but a cry.

## In Memoriam

LV.

The wish, that of the living whole  
No life may fail beyond the grave,  
Derives it not from what we have  
The likest God within the soul ?

Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams ?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere  
Her secret meaning in her deeds,  
And finding that of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI.

“ So careful of the type ? ” but no.  
From scarped cliff and quarried stone

## In Memoriam

She cries: "A thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:  
I bring to life, I bring to death:  
The spirit does but mean the breath:  
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,  
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,  
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed  
And love, Creation's final law —  
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shrieked against his creed —

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,  
Who battled for the True, the Just,  
Be blown about the desert dust,  
Or sealed within the iron hills ?

No more ? A monster then, a dream,  
A discord. Dragons of the prime,  
That tear each other in their slime,  
Were mellow music matched with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail !  
O for thy voice to soothe and bless !

## In Memoriam

What hope of answer or redress?  
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

### LVII.

Peace; come away: the song of woe  
Is after all an earthly song:  
Peace; come away: we do him wrong  
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come let us go: your cheeks are pale;  
But half my life I leave behind:  
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;  
But I shall pass, my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,  
One set slow bell will seem to toll  
The passing of the sweetest soul  
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,  
Eternal greetings to the dead,  
And "Ave, Ave, Ave," said,  
"Adieu, adieu," for evermore.

The division closes with LVIII in which Urania advises him not to waste fruitless tears on his friend's death but to wait a little longer and then he will see more clearly.

## In Memoriam

The next three general divisions teach hope for the best and the acceptance of sorrow as a chastener. Sad, awful visions come to him in the night and he sees his friend's burial place, learns what the future might have had in store for him and dwells upon the vanity of fame and monuments. Another Christmas comes but not with the same feelings and once more faith in the future and in advancement after death takes hold upon him. The poems of this division, closing with LXXXIII, are some of the finest of the series.

### LXV.

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;  
I lull a fancy trouble-tossed  
With "Love's too precious to be lost,  
A little grain shall not be spilt."

And in that solace can I sing,  
Till out of painful phases wrought  
There flutters up a happy thought,  
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,  
And thine effect so lives in me,  
A part of mine may live in thee  
And move thee on to noble ends.

## In Memoriam

### LXVII.

When on my bed the moonlight falls,  
I know that in thy place of rest,  
By that broad water of the west,  
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,  
As slowly steals a silver flame  
Along the letters of thy name,  
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;  
From off my bed the moonlight dies;  
And closing eaves of wearied eyes  
I sleep till dusk is dipped in gray:

And then I know the mist is drawn  
A lucid veil from coast to coast,  
And in the dark church like a ghost  
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

### LXXIII.

So many worlds, so much to do,  
So little done, such things to be,  
How know I what had need of thee,  
For thou wert strong as thou wert true?

## In Memoriam

The fame is quenched that I foresaw,  
The head hath missed an earthly wreath;  
I curse not nature, no, nor death;  
For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass: the path that each man trod  
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:  
What fame is left for human deeds  
In endless age? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,  
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,  
And self-infolds the large results  
Of force that would have forged a name.

The poems LXXXIV to LXXXIX make the tenth section in which “The low beginnings of content” result in (1) acceptance of loss, (2) new attachments, (3) power to dwell with pleasure in the past.

### LXXXIV.

When I contemplate all alone  
The life that had been thine below,  
And fix my thoughts on all the glow  
To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crowned with good,  
A central warmth diffusing bliss

## In Memoriam

In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,  
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;

For now the day was drawing on,

When thou should'st link thy life with one  
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled “Uncle” on my knee;

But that remorseless iron hour

Made cypress of her orange flower,  
Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,

To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.

I see their unborn faces shine

Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honored guest,

Thy partner in the flowery walk

Of letters, genial table-talk,

Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labor fills

The lips of men with honest praise,

And sun by sun the happy days

Descend below the golden hills.

With promise of a morn as fair;

And all the train of bounteous hours

## In Memoriam

Conduct by paths of growing powers  
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,  
    Her lavish mission richly wrought,  
    Leaving great legacies of thought,  
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,  
    As linked with thine in love and fate,  
    And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait  
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,  
    And He that died in Holy Land  
    Would reach us out the shining hand,  
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant ?  
    Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake  
    The old bitterness again, and break  
The low beginnings of content.

## LXXXVI.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,  
    That rollest from the gorgeous gloom  
    Of evening over brake and bloom  
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

### In Memoriam

The round of space, and rapt below  
Thro' all the dewy-tasselled wood,  
And shadowing down the horned flood  
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh  
The full new life that feeds thy breath  
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and  
Death,  
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas  
On leagues of odor streaming far,  
To where in yonder orient star  
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

### LXXXVIII.

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,  
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,  
Oh, tell me where the senses mix,  
Oh, tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ  
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,  
And in the midmost heart of grief  
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I — my harp would prelude woe —  
I can not all command the strings;

## In Memoriam

The glory of the sum of things  
Will flash along the chords and go.

The next part terminates with XCVI. Indignant at the idea that any person would not welcome the dead if they could return to us, he yet recognizes the difficulties that might arise. Still he is anxious to see Hallam.

### xci.

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;  
Or underneath the barren bush  
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know  
Thy spirit in time among thy peers,  
The hope of unaccomplish'd years  
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change  
May breathe, with many roses sweet,  
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,  
That ripple round the lonely grange;

Come: not in watches of the night,  
But when the sunbeam broodeth warm,  
Come, beauteous in thine after form,  
And like a finer light in light.

## In Memoriam

If a vision should reveal Hallam, Tennyson could not believe in his friend's actual presence if the vision promised what afterward came true. He does not know that a spirit ever does return to earth so as to be recognized but dares ask that Hallam's spirit shall hear "the wish too strong for words to name" and meet and commune with his own spirit, though the poet's eye is unable to see the form of his friend.

### XCIV.

How pure at heart and sound in head,  
With what divine affections bold  
Should be the man whose thought would hold  
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call  
The spirits from their golden day,  
Except, like them, thou too canst say,  
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,  
Imaginations calm and fair,  
The memory like a cloudless air,  
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,  
And doubt beside the portal waits,  
They can but listen at the gates,  
And hear the household jar within.

## In Memoriam

Now follows a family scene, in which after a gathering upon the lawn where all the family lingered, Tennyson retired to the house and spent the night with Hallam's last-written letters through which the dead man touched him from the past.

### XCVI.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,  
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light blue eyes  
Are tender over drowning flies,  
You tell me, doubt is devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;  
And power was with him in the night,

## In Memoriam

Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

The twelfth and thirteenth sections carry the elegy on to the end of CXV. They show the dim foreshadowing of a perfect content that is to come. Though the old sore opens easily the poet sees the wisdom of his affliction and will embrace his present life of sorrow and disappointment, learning wisdom therefrom. CIII contains a beautiful dream significant of the belief that whatever is beautiful here on earth we may take with us beyond.

### CVI.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night:  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

## In Memoriam

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



*"RING OUT, WILD BELLS"*



## In Memoriam

### CVIII.

I will not shut me from my kind,  
And, lest I stiffen into stone,  
I will not eat my heart alone,  
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind :

What profit lies in barren faith,  
And vacant yearning, tho' with might  
To scale the heaven's highest height,  
Or dive below the wells of Death ?

What find I in the highest place,  
But mine own phantom chanting hymns ?  
And on the depths of death there swims  
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be  
Of sorrow under human skies :  
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,  
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

With the coming of spring, hope reawakens and this soon ripens into faith and confidence. Such is the idea of the ten poems that compose the fifteenth division.

### CXXII.

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,  
While I rose up against my doom,

## In Memoriam

And yearned to burst the folded gloom,  
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,  
The strong imagination roll  
A sphere of stars about my soul,  
In all her motion one with law;

If thou wert with me, and the grave  
Divide us not, be with me now,  
And enter in at breast and brow,  
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quickened with a livelier breath,  
And like an inconsiderate boy,  
As in the former flash of joy,  
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,  
And every dew-drop paints a bow,  
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,  
And every thought breaks out a rose.

The last section beginning with CXXV is a triumphant burst of song. Faith, Hope, and Love are conquerors and the greatest of these is Love. Without it Hope could not be born and Faith is weak.

## In Memoriam

### CXXV.

Whatever I have said or sung,  
Some bitter notes my harp would give,  
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live  
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth;  
She did but look through dimmer eyes;  
Or Love but played with gracious lies,  
Because he felt so fixed in truth :

And if the song were full of care,  
He breathed the spirit of the song;  
And if the words were sweet and strong,  
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail  
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,  
And this electric force, that keeps  
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

### CXXVI.

Love is and was my lord and king,  
And in his presence I attend  
To hear the tidings of my friend,  
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,  
And will be, tho' as yet I keep

## In Memoriam

Within his court on earth, and sleep  
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel  
Who moves about from place to place,  
And whispers to the worlds of space,  
In the deep night, that all is well.

### CXXVII.

And all is well, tho' faith and form  
Be sundered in the night of fear;  
Well roars the storm to those that hear  
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,  
And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again  
The red fool-fury of the Seine  
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,  
And him, the lazarus, in his rags:  
They tremble, the sustaining crags;  
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;  
The fortress crashes from on high,  
The brute earth lightens to the sky,  
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

## In Memoriam

And compass'd by the fires of Hell;  
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,  
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,  
And smilest, knowing all is well.

### CXXIX.

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,  
So far, so near in woe and weal;  
Oh loved the most, when most I feel  
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;  
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;  
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,  
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;  
Loved deeper, darklier understood;  
Behold, I dream a dream of good,  
And mingle all the world with thee.

The last poem is the marriage lay for his sister, whom Hallam had known in her childhood. It is cheerful and even gay and leaves behind it a happy sense of the confident soul that is Tennyson's after his long struggle with doubt and the great problems of life which were thrust upon him by the unfortunate death of his friend.

## In Memoriam

### CXXXI.

O living will that shalt endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
Rise in the spiritual rock,  
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust  
A voice as unto him that hears,  
A cry above the conquered years  
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,  
The truths that never can be proved  
Until we close with all we loved,  
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

---

O true and tried, so well and long,  
Demand not thou a marriage lay;  
In that it is thy marriage day  
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss  
Since first he told me that he loved  
A daughter of our house; nor proved  
Since that dark day a day like this;

## In Memoriam

Tho' I since then have numbered o'er  
Some thrice three years: they went and  
came,  
Remade the blood and changed the frame,  
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm  
In dying songs a dead regret,  
But like a statue solid-set,  
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more  
Than in the summers that are flown,  
For I myself with these have grown  
To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made  
As echoes out of weaker times,  
As half but idle brawling rhymes,  
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,  
That must be made a wife ere noon?  
She enters, glowing like the moon  
Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes  
And then on thee; they meet thy look

## In Memoriam

And brighten like the star that shook  
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

Oh, when her life was yet in bud,  
He too foretold the perfect rose.  
For thee she grew, for thee she grows  
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy; full of power;  
As gentle, liberal-minded, great,  
Consistent; wearing all that weight  
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,  
And I must give away the bride;  
She fears not, or with thee beside  
And me behind her, will not fear:

For I that danced her on my knee,  
That watched her on her nurse's arm,  
That shielded all her life from harm,  
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,  
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;  
Their pensive tablets round her head  
And the most living words of life

## In Memoriam

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,  
The "wilt thou?" answer'd, and again  
The "wilt thou?" asked till out of twain  
Her sweet "I will" has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read,  
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,  
By village eyes as yet unborn;  
The names are signed, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells  
The joy to every wandering breeze;  
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees  
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

Oh, happy hour, and happier hours  
Await them. Many a merry face  
Salutes them — maidens of the place,  
That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

Oh, happy hour, behold the bride  
With him to whom her hand I gave.  
They leave the porch, they pass the grave  
That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,  
For them the light of life increased,  
Who stay to share the morning feast,  
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

## In Memoriam

Let all my genial spirits advance  
To meet and greet a whiter sun;  
My drooping memory will not shun  
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,  
And hearts are warmed, and faces bloom,  
As drinking health to bride and groom  
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I  
Conjecture of a stiller guest,  
Perchance, perchance, among the rest,  
And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,  
And those white-favored horses wait;  
They rise, but linger; it is late;  
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark  
From little cloudlets on the grass,  
But sweeps away as out we pass  
To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,  
And talk of others that are wed,  
And how she look'd, and what he said,  
And back we come at fall of dew.

## In Memoriam

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,  
The shade of passing thought, the wealth  
Of words and wit, the double health,  
The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance;—till I retire:  
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,  
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,  
And on the downs a rising fire.

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,  
Till over down and over dale  
All night the shining vapor sail  
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,  
And catch at every mountain head,  
And o'er the friths that branch and spread  
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,  
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;  
And breaking let the splendor fall  
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,  
And, star and system rolling past,  
A soul shall draw from out the vast  
And strike his being into bounds,

## In Memoriam

And moved thro' life of lower phase,  
Result in man, be born and think,  
And act and love, a closer link  
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look  
On knowledge; under whose command  
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand  
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,  
For all we thought and loved and did,  
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod  
This planet, was a noble type  
Appearing ere the times were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.

## The Classic Elegy

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Bion, a great poet who lived about two hundred and sixty years before Christ, wrote a beautiful lament for Adonis who, according to the legend, was killed while hunting the wild boar. According to the Greek legend, Adonis was the most beautiful of mortals and was ardently loved by Venus, to whom he was allowed by Jupiter to devote one third of his time, while another third he must give to the queen of shadows, Persephone. Of the remainder, he himself was master and this he preferred to spend with Venus. People see the origin of this myth to be in the seasons; of which winter lasts four months, the time Adonis, light or the sun, was with Persephone. Venus, finding her lover dead in the forest, laments his loss. Bion's elegy is a direct address to Venus, in which he alludes to the circumstances of the death of Adonis and represents the Loves as joining in her grief. Mrs. Browning has made a metrical version of the poem, from which this is a selection that gives some idea of the style:

*I mourn for Adonis — the Loves are lamenting.*

He lies on the hills in his beauty and death;  
The white tusk of a wild boar has transpierced  
his white thigh.

## The Classic Elegy

Cytherea grows mad at his thin, gasping  
breath,  
While the black blood drips down on the pale  
ivory,  
And his eyeballs lie quenched with the  
weight of his brows;  
The rose fades from his lips, and upon them  
just parted  
The kiss dies, the goddess consents not to  
lose,  
Though the kiss of the dead can not make  
her light-hearted;  
He knows not who kisses him dead in the  
dews.

On the death of Bion, Moschus, his pupil, of whom little is known, wrote a beautiful lament for his master. In this he calls on nature to mourn for Bion, calls on the woodland glades, the rivers and groves; on the roses to redden in their sorrow; on the windflower to turn red in its grief. He begs the Muses to join in the wail and calls up the pathetic scenes of Grecian mythology to emphasize his grief. Bion is likened to a shepherd in true pastoral fashion, and the loss of his song is lamented by Apollo, the satyrs and the famed musicians of classic times. Had Moschus the power, he would go to the lower world and, like Orpheus of old, charm Pluto into releasing

## The Classic Elegy

the dead Bion that he might once more return to his grieving friends.

These quotations are taken from a prose version by Andrew Lang.

*“Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.*

No more to his herds he sings, that beloved herdsman, no more 'neath the lonely oaks he sits and sings, nay, but by Pluteus's side he chants a refrain of oblivion. The mountains too are voiceless: and the heifers that wander with the herds lament and refuse their pasture.”

*“Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.*

Nor so much, by the gray sea-waves, did ever the sea-bird sing, nor so much in the dells of dawn did the birds of Memnon bewail the son of the Morning, fluttering around his tomb, as they lamented for Bion dead.

Nightingales, and all the swallows that once he was wont to delight, that he would teach to speak, they sat over against each other on the boughs and kept moaning, and the birds sang in answer, ‘Wail, ye wretched ones, even ye! ’ ’

## The Classic Elegy

The poems just cited, with others of similar form, became the model for many English elegies. The pastoral which Virgil makes most familiar to the modern college student, seemed peculiarly fitted to the expression of grief, and the simple loves of shepherds tending their flocks, the songs they sang to the accompaniment of their oaten pipes, their sorrows and their joys become figuratively the symbols of more modern feeling.

When Sir Philip Sidney was killed near Zutphen, the mourning in England was more profound and general than had ever been known. The Court and the people vied in doing honor to his knightly spirit and in manifesting their grief in outward show. Many poets contributed their share to the general lamentation and Edmund Spenser about 1587 wrote a purely pastoral elegy which he called *Astrophel*; a fanciful name meaning star-lover, assumed by Sidney in some of his own poems. *Astrophel* is a gentle shepherd born in Arcady:

“For from the time that first the Nymph,  
his mother,  
Him forth did bring, and taught her lambs  
to feed;  
A slender swaine, excelling far each other,  
In comely shape, like her that did him  
breed,

### The Classic Elegy

He grew up fast in goodnesse and in grace,  
And doubly faire woxe both in mynd and  
face.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“For he could pipe, and daunce, and caroll  
sweet,

Emongst the shepheards in their shearing  
feast;

As somers larke that with her song doth greet  
The dawning day forth comming from the  
East.

And layes of love he also could compose:  
Thrise happie she, whom he to praise did  
choose.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“And many a Nymph both of the wood and  
brooke,

Soone as his oaten pipe began to shrill,  
Both christall wells and shadie groves forsooke  
To heare the charmes of his enchanting  
skill;

And brought him presents, flowers if it were  
prime,

Or mellow fruit if it were harvest time.”

But Stella (the Countess of Essex to whom  
the poem is dedicated) is the one to whom Sid-  
ney devoted himself and of whom alone he

## The Classic Elegy

sang. To her he vowed service of bold deeds  
and he was well able to achieve success for he  
was

“In wrestling nimble, and in running swift,  
In shooting steddie, and in swimming strong;  
Well made to strike, to throw, to leape, to lift,  
And all the sports the shepherds are emong.  
In every one he vanquisht every one,  
He vanquisht all, and vanquisht was of none.”

He was exceedingly fond of hunting and having  
great skill and wishing to raise his own fame he  
“sought where salvage beasts do most abound.”  
It happened that when he was abroad he came  
into a great forest where he tried “the bruitish  
nation (Spain) to enwrap.”

“So as he rag’d emongst the beastly rout,  
A cruell beast of most accursed brood  
Upon him turnd, (despeyre makes cowards  
stout,)  
And, with fell tooth accustomed to blood,  
Launched his thigh with so mischievous might,  
That it both bone and muscles ryved quight.”

The poet wonders where the other shepherds  
and the *faire mayds* were that they did not stop  
the flow of the awful wound. But shepherds  
wandering that way found him and bore him

## The Classic Elegy

“unto his loved lassie” who “when she saw her Love in such a plight” grieved frantically until  
“At last when paine her vital pours had spent,  
His wasted life her weary lodge forwent.”

Stella could not remain behind and in death at once joined her lover.

“The gods, which all things see, this same beheld,  
And, pittyng this paire of lovers trew,  
Transformed them there lying on the field  
Into one flowre that is both red and blew;  
It first grows red, and then to blew doth fade,  
Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.

And in the midst thereof a star appeares,  
As fairly formd as any star in skyes:  
Resembling Stella in her freshest yeares,  
Forth darting beames of beautie from her eyes:  
And all the day it standeth full of deow,  
Which is the teares, that from her eyes did flow.

That hearbe of some, Starlight is cald by name,  
Of others Penthia, though not so well:  
But thou, where ever thou doest finde the same,  
From this day forth do call it Astrophel:

## The Classic Elegy

And, when so ever thou it up doest take,  
Do pluck it softly for that shepheard's sake.

Tears are said to beget the windflower, or anemone. The poets make frequent use of the many fanciful legends of the origin of flowers.

This long introduction to the classical elegy has been given in order to prepare for the two which are to be the special subject for study. What seems so forced and strained to our modern taste, becomes natural and beautiful when known in the light of the classic models. To prosaic minds the imagery, the assumption of pastoral qualities, and the wealth of classic allusion are apt to seem useless and burdensome unless they acquaint themselves with the contents of the storehouses from which the poets drew their own inspiration. If one can not know the classics thoroughly he can at least acquire some of their spirit at second hand from the English transformation. So the two remaining elegies should be studied with particular care, and to assist in that they have been somewhat more fully annotated.

## Lycidas

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Edward King was a fellow-student of Milton at Cambridge. He was a promising young man who had shown some talent in versification. In crossing to Ireland in August, 1637, he was shipwrecked and drowned. At the time of his death he was a tutor and fellow in the college. It is not known that Milton was particularly intimate with King, but when a small volume of memorial verse was published at Cambridge in the same year, Milton's poem *Lycidas* was incorporated with the others. In it he bewails the loss of his friend, but he introduces other reflections that give historic value to the piece. That the poem expresses a real personal grief is questionable; it seems a trifle artificial and to voice merely a general regret at the catastrophe, yet the poem has many ardent admirers. Mark Pattison says "This piece, unmatched in the whole range of English poetry and never again to be equaled by Milton himself leaves criticism behind. Indeed, so high is the poetic note here reached that the common ear fails to catch it." Another has written in equally strong terms: "To say that *Lycidas* is beautiful is to say that a star or a rose is beautiful. Conceive the finest and purest graces of the Pagan mythology, culled and mingled with modest yet daring hand among the

## Lycidas

roses of Sharon and the lilies of the valley — conceive the waters of Castalia sprinkled on the flowers which grow in the garden of God — and you have a faint conception of what *Lycidas* means to do.”

— *Gilfillan.*

The poem must be remembered as the last one written in what is known as the first period of Milton’s work, that period in which he was a cavalier, adherent to the King, and before he became the stern councilor and bitter advocate of Puritanism. In *Lycidas* are heard notes of the approaching change: “All I desire to point out here is that in *Lycidas* Milton’s original picturesque vein is for the first time crossed with one of quite another sort, stern, determined, obscurely indicative of suppressed passion, and the resolution to do or die. The fanaticism of the covenanter and the sad grace of Petrarch seem to meet in Milton’s monody. Yet these opposites instead of neutralizing each other are blended into one harmonious whole by the presiding but invisible genius of the poet. The conflict between the old cavalier world — the years of gayety and festivity of a splendid and pleasure-loving court — and the new Puritan world, into which love and pleasure are not to enter — this conflict which was entering into the social life of England, is also begun in Milton’s own breast and is reflected in *Lycidas*. . . . In the earlier poems Milton’s muse has sung in the tones of the age that is passing away;

## Lycidas

except in his austere chastity, a cavalier. Though even in *L'Allegro* Dr. Johnson truly detects 'some melancholy in his mirth' in *Lycidas*, for a moment, the tones of both ages—the past and the present—are combined and then Milton leaves behind him forever the golden age and one half his poetic genius." — *Mark Pattison*.

The versification and the rhymes are notably varied and give a unique charm to the production. The student should trace out these variations and note the effect they produce. Masson says: "Then the interlinking and intertwining of the rhymes, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes, or even in fives, and at all varieties of intervals, from that of the contiguous couplet to that of an unobserved chime or stanza of some length, are positive perfection. Occasionally, too, there is a line that does not rhyme; and in every such case, though the rhyme is not missed by the reader's ear, in so much music is the line embedded, yet a delicate artistic reason may be detected or fancied for its formal absence."

## Lycidas<sup>1</sup>

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Yet once more,<sup>2</sup> O ye Laurels,<sup>3</sup> and once more,

Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,<sup>4</sup>

And with forc'd fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear<sup>5</sup>  
Compels<sup>6</sup> me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,<sup>7</sup>  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew

---

1. A name originally meaning purity. It is borne by a shepherd in one of Bion's idyls and in an eclogue by Virgil.

2. Milton had decided to await the maturity of his powers before writing more, but the death of his friend urges him to take up the pen.

3. The laurel was the meed for poetic victory; the myrtle symbolized peace and was held by each singer in turn at a Greek banquet; the ivy, significant of friendship, was twined about the brow of the poet. Milton, seizing these, would sing once more.

4. His own poetic powers are not of the highest, in his own estimation.

5. The death of his friend is dear to him, that is, touches him closely.

6. Singular form of the verb, to show close union of subjects.

7. King was twenty-five years old. Note also the expression, "young swain," used later.



*JOHN MILTON*



## Lycidas

Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.<sup>8</sup>  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter<sup>9</sup> to the parching wind  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.<sup>10</sup>

Begin then, Sisters of the Sacred Well,<sup>11</sup>  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth  
spring,

Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
Hence<sup>12</sup> with denial vain and coy excuse;  
So may some gentle Muse<sup>13</sup>  
With lucky words favor my destin'd urn,<sup>14</sup>  
And, as he passes, turn  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.<sup>15</sup>

For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,<sup>16</sup>  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and  
rill;

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,

---

8. King had written a few verses.

9. To be tossed about by the wind.

10. Mournful songs have been called the tears of the Muses.

11. The Nine Muses had their birth near the Pierian spring in a grove  
near the foot of Mount Olympus. There were other wells sacred to the  
Muses. "Begin then," is in imitation of the classic laments.

12. Away with.

13. Poet, inspired by Muse. 14. My grave.

15. Black coffin. Milton hopes some poet may favor him with an  
elegy.

16. Attended the same college, Christ's College, Cambridge. None  
of this is to be considered literally.

## Lycidas

We drove afield, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly<sup>17</sup> winds her sultry  
horn,  
Batt'ning<sup>18</sup> our flocks with the fresh dews of  
night,  
Oft till the star that rose at ev'ning bright<sup>19</sup>  
Towards Heav'ns descent had slop'd his wes-  
tering<sup>20</sup> wheel,  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Temper'd to th' oaten flute,<sup>21</sup>  
Rough Satyrs<sup>22</sup> danc'd and Fauns<sup>23</sup> with  
clov'n heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent  
long,  
And old Damoetas<sup>24</sup> lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art  
gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return!

---

17. The trumpet-fly hums loudly during midday.

18. Feeding.

19. Possibly Hesperus, the evening star.

20. Westward-going.

21. In pastoral poetry the shepherds always pipe on an oaten flute.

22. Greek deities of woods and fields whose hoofs and horns and short, bristling hair did not improve their appearance. Pan was the chief of these and he it was who invented the shepherd's pipe and played upon it in masterly manner.

23. Male divinities of Latin mythology like the satyrs. It has been thought that the allusion is to the Cambridge students.

24. A common name in pastoral poetry. The allusion is probably to a tutor in Christ's College.

## Lycidas

Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert  
caves

With wild thyme and the gadding<sup>25</sup> vine o'er-  
grown

And all their echoes mourn.

The willows and the hazel copses green

Shall now no more be seen

Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

As killing as the canker<sup>26</sup> to the rose,

Or taint-worm<sup>27</sup> to the weanling herds that  
graze,

Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe  
wear

When first the white thorn<sup>28</sup> blows:

Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherds' ear.<sup>29</sup>

Where were ye, Nymphs,<sup>30</sup> when the re-  
morseless deep

Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?

For neither were ye playing on the steep<sup>31</sup>

---

25. Straggling.

26. A worm that destroys the leaves and blossoms.

27. A parasite especially destructive to sheep, or a small red spider erroneously believed by the country folk to be a deadly poison to horses and cattle.

28. Hawthorne, a shrub allied to our thornapple.

29. This stanza is the most personal expression of loss in the entire poem.

30. The female companions of Pan and his partners in the dance. The allusion to them is in conformity to the classic models Milton is following.

31. Probably the high hills in Denbighshire which are known as burial places of the Druids.

## Lycidas

Where your old bards, the famous Druids,<sup>32</sup>  
lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona<sup>33</sup> high,  
Nor yet where Deva<sup>34</sup> spreads her wizard  
stream.

Ay me! I fondly dream!  
Had ye been there — for what could that have  
done?  
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus  
bore,<sup>35</sup>  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
Whom universal Nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous  
roar  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian  
shore?<sup>36</sup>  
Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherds' trade,

---

32. Priests of an early English faith, the ruins of whose rustic temples still exist.

33. The isle of Anglesea was a fastness of the Druids.

34. The river Dee. On its banks is Chester the place from which King sailed. Many legends connected with it give it the right to the title "wizard stream."

35. This was Calliope the mother of Orpheus.

36. In their orgies the Thracian women tore Orpheus in pieces. His head was thrown into the Hebrus River, down which it floated singing and was finally cast ashore on the island of Lesbos.

## Lycidas

And strictly meditate the thankless Muse? <sup>37</sup>  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's <sup>38</sup> hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear <sup>39</sup> spirit doth  
raise

(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind fury <sup>40</sup> with the abhorred  
shears,  
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the  
praise," <sup>41</sup>  
Phœbus <sup>42</sup> repli'd, and touch'd my trembling  
ears; <sup>43</sup>

---

37. Of what use is it to ply the poet's art? The great English poets have passed away and Milton with his high ideals is discouraged.

38. Were it not better to spend one's life in pleasure and idleness than to try to accomplish fame in poetry? Amaryllis and Neæra are names in the Greek idyls.

39. Noble.

40. The three Fates presided over human destiny. One spun the thread of life in which the dark and the light were mingled; another twisted the thread and made it now strong, now weak; the third, Atropos, armed with shears cut the thread and closed the life. The Furies were avenging deities whom Milton seems to have confused with the Fates.

41. But Fate can not destroy the praise that is due a man.

42. Apollo, most glorious of the gods, who presided over music, poetry and the fine arts.

43. To touch the ears was to prompt the memory. The allusion is to classic lines, for Virgil says: "When I thought to sing of kings and battles, Apollo touched my ear."

## Lycidas

“Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistering foil <sup>44</sup>  
Set off to th’ world, nor in broad Rumor lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove; <sup>45</sup>  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in Heav’n expect thy meed.”

O fountain Arethuse, <sup>46</sup> and thou honor’d  
flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, <sup>47</sup> crown’d with vocal  
reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood;  
But now my oat proceeds, <sup>48</sup>  
And listens to the herald of the sea <sup>49</sup>  
That came in Neptune’s plea. <sup>50</sup>  
He ask’d the waves, and ask’d the felon winds  
What hard mishap hath doom’d this gentle  
swain ?  
And question’d every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beaked promontory;

---

44. Nor in the tinsel by which the world sets off her jewels.

45. The chief divinity of the Latins.

46. The poet returns to his pastoral model. Arethuse, a fountain near Syracuse, sacred to the pastoral muse, is here personified.

47. A river tributary to the Po, honored in being the birthplace of Virgil.

48. I resume my song.

49. Triton, the son of Neptune, half man and half fish.

50. Neptune, the god of the sea. Triton came in defense of Neptune who was not responsible for the death of King and catechised his witnesses.

## Lycidas

They knew not of his story,  
And sage Hippotades<sup>51</sup> their answer brings:  
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,  
The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters<sup>52</sup> play'd.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark  
Built in th' eclipse,<sup>53</sup> and rigg'd with curses  
dark,

That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.<sup>54</sup>

Next Camus,<sup>55</sup> reverend sire, went footing  
slow,<sup>56</sup>

His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge<sup>57</sup>  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with  
woe.<sup>58</sup>

“Ah! who hath reft” (quoth he) “my dearest  
pledge?”

Last came, and last did go,

51. Æolus, the god of the winds.

52. The Nereids, nymphs of the sea.

53. Proverbially an unlucky time.

54. Triton concludes that the ship sank in calm waters through no fault of the gods.

55. Personification of the river Cam on which the college was located; hence the University.

56. The Cam is a very slow river.

57. Masson says: “The mantle is as if made of ‘river sponge,’ which floats copiously in the Cam; the bonnet of the ‘river sedge,’ distinguished by vague marks traced somehow over the middle of the leaves, and serrated at the edge of the leaves.”

58. The hyacinth. Hyacinth was slain and from his blood sprang the flower.

## Lycidas

The pilot of the Galilean lake;<sup>59</sup>  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain);  
He shook his miter'd locks,<sup>60</sup> and stern be-  
spake:  
“How well could I have spar'd for thee, young  
Swain,  
Enow<sup>61</sup> of such as for their bellies' sake  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?<sup>62</sup>  
Of other care they little reck'ning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;  
Blind mouths!<sup>63</sup> that scarce themselves know  
how to hold  
A sheep-hook,<sup>64</sup> or have learn'd aught else the  
least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !

---

59. St. Peter. He is represented in art as carrying two keys and the crossed keys are still the Pope's insignia. King was educated for the church, hence the grief of St. Peter.

60. St. Peter was the first bishop of the church and so wore the miter. Here follows another digression in which Milton rails against the Established Church as it then was governed. This is his first expression of sympathy with the Puritan Church.

61. Enough.

62. Those ministers who enter the church for the living to be obtained. Notice biblical allusion in “climb into the fold.” John 10:1.

63. These men are mouths and nothing else.

64. They are ignorant men scarce knowing how to hold a shepherd's crook. The metaphor is a little mixed.

## Lycidas

What recks it them? <sup>65</sup> What need they?  
they are sped; <sup>66</sup>  
And when they list <sup>67</sup> their lean and flashy  
songs  
Grate on their scannel <sup>68</sup> pipes of wretched  
straw;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they  
draw,  
Rot inwardly, <sup>69</sup> and foul contagion spread;  
Besides what the grim wolf <sup>70</sup> with privy <sup>71</sup> paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said;  
But that two-handed engine <sup>72</sup> at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore, <sup>73</sup>  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

---

65. What do they care?

66. They are provided for.

67. Wish.

68. Screechy. Thin. Milton's own word.

69. Their souls decay.

70. Possibly the Catholic Church to whom many were returning at that time.

71. Secret.

72. This is not clear. Milton may have meant the sword of justice, but the general idea of the two lines is that retribution is at hand for this corruption of the church. The prophecy proved a true one.

73. The presiding deity of the shore, caring for all that navigate the ocean.

## Lycidas

Thus sang the uncouth swain<sup>74</sup> to th' oaks  
and rills,  
While the still morn went out with sandals  
gray;  
He touch'd the tender stops<sup>75</sup> of various  
quills,<sup>76</sup>  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;<sup>77</sup>  
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the  
hills,<sup>78</sup>  
And now was dropt into the western bay;  
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue;<sup>79</sup>  
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.<sup>80</sup>

---

74. Rude or uncultivated or, as some commentators think, unknown.

75. Of his instrument.

76. Used in playing the lyre.

77. Many pastorals were written in the Doric dialect.

78. The evening sun had lengthened the shadows.

79. Drew about him his blue mantle such as shepherds wear.

80. The last eight lines form an epilogue and of course the allusion is to Milton himself.

## Adonais

---

Keats and Shelley were not intimate friends but the former had produced some poetry that was highly admired by Shelley, who was also deeply stirred up by the fierce criticism with which Keats's poems had been assailed. While it is not probable that this criticism was at all instrumental in causing the poet's death yet Shelley attributed it to that cause. From his preface to *Adonais* the following selection is taken:

“John Keats was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city (Rome) under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where canker-worms abound what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* produced the

## Adonais

most violent effect on his susceptible mind. The agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued; and the succeeding acknowledgments, from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound wantonly inflicted. . . .”

The poem is a most artistic creation and one of the best Shelley wrote. It is formed on the model of the *Idyls* of Bion and it is evident that even in the title Shelley calls attention to Adonis in whose unfortunate death he sees a prototype of that of Keats. It is interesting to remember in this connection that by that terrible tragedy in the Gulf of Spezia the genius of Shelley himself was lost to the world but a few months after the poem was written and that much of the perfect elegy is equally applicable to its author.

The poem is of uniform structure so far as the stanzas are concerned but each stanza is so varied in rhythm and rhyme that its exquisite music never grows monotonous. Each stanza has nine verses, eight of iambic pentameter, and the last, iambic hexameter Alexandrine. The rhyme scheme is uniform but curious and varied. Occasionally there are imperfect rhymes but they are not unpleasant and the reader soon learns to admire the long-sustained regularity of its *ababbc-bcc*. This is the Spenserian stanza and it was a



*PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY*



## Adonais

great favorite with Lord Byron, the intimate friend of Shelley.

Shelley's own opinion of his work is the general verdict: "The *Adonais* in spite of its mysticism is the least imperfect of my compositions. It is a highly wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better in point of composition, than anything I have written."

## Adonais

*An Elegy on the Death of John Keats*

I weep for Adonais — he is dead!<sup>1</sup>  
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears  
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a  
head !  
And thou, sad Hour,<sup>2</sup> selected from all years  
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure<sup>3</sup> com-  
peers,  
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with  
me  
Died Adonais; till the Future dares  
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be  
An echo and a light unto eternity !

---

1. The first line of Bion's lament for Adonis is : "I mourn for Adonis ; beauteous Adonis is dead."

2. The hour in which Keats died.

3. Why are they obscure?

## Adonais

Where wert thou mighty Mother,<sup>4</sup> when he  
    lay,  
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft  
    which flies  
In darkness?<sup>5</sup> where was lorn Urania  
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,  
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise  
She sate, while one, with soft enamored  
    breath,  
Rekindled all the fading melodies,  
With which, like flowers that mock the  
    corse beneath,  
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of  
    death.

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!  
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!  
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burn-  
    ing bed  
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep  
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;  
For he is gone, where all things wise and  
    fair  
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous  
    Deep<sup>6</sup>

---

4. Urania, the “Heavenly Muse” to whom Milton speaks and who speaks to Tennyson in *In Memoriam*.

5. What is the shaft that flies in darkness?

6. What is meant by the metaphor “amorous Deep”?

## Adonais

Will yet restore him to the vital air;  
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at  
our despair.

Most musical of mourners, weep again !  
Lament anew, Urania ! — He died,  
Who was the Sire<sup>7</sup> of an immortal strain,<sup>8</sup>  
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's  
pride,  
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,  
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd  
rite  
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,  
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite  
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons  
of light.<sup>9</sup>

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !  
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;<sup>10</sup>  
And happier they their happiness who knew,  
Whose tapers yet burn through that night  
of time  
In which suns perished; others more sublime,

---

7. John Milton.

8. What was the "immortal strain"?

9. Who were the other two sons of light? Were they the ones whom Dryden classes with Milton?

10. This is recognized as an obscure stanza. Hales suggests that it means that all have not attempted Epic poetry as did Milton, but some have contented themselves with lyric poetry and have succeeded, while still others living yet have not yet found their niche in Fame's temple.

## Adonais

Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,  
Have sunk, extinct in their resplendent prime;  
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,  
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's  
serene abode.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has  
perished,  
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,  
Like a pale flower<sup>11</sup> by some sad maiden  
cherished,  
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;  
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !  
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,  
The bloom, whose petals nipt before they  
blew  
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;  
The broken lily lies — the storm is overpast.

To that high Capital,<sup>12</sup> where kingly Death  
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,  
He came; and bought, with price of purest  
breath,  
A grave among the eternal.— Come away !  
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day  
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still

---

11. Remember the pathetic life of Keats. Note the last line of this stanza. What was the storm?

12. What city is this? Where did Keats die?

## Adonais

He lies, as if in dewy sleep <sup>13</sup> he lay;  
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill  
Of deep and liquid rest, <sup>14</sup> forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more ! —  
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace  
The shadow of white Death, <sup>15</sup> and at the  
door  
Invisible corruption waits to trace  
His extreme way <sup>16</sup> to her <sup>17</sup> dim dwelling-  
place; <sup>18</sup>  
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe  
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface  
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law  
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal cur-  
tain draw.

O, weep for Adonais ! — The quick Dreams,  
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,  
Who were his flocks, <sup>19</sup> whom near the living  
streams

---

13. What particular aptness in the phrase “dewy sleep”?

14. Why “*liquid* rest”?

15. “Yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.”  
Why *white* death?

16. What is meant by this phrase?

17. Whose dim dwelling-place?

18. What is her dwelling-place?

19. What were the flocks of the shepherd Adonais? What were Keats’s  
“quick Dreams”?

## Adonais

Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he  
taught  
The love which was its music, wander not,—  
Wander no more, from kindling brain to  
brain,  
But droop there, whence they sprung; and  
mourn their lot<sup>20</sup>  
Round the cold heart, where, after their  
sweet pain,  
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home  
again.

And one<sup>21</sup> with trembling hands clasps his  
cold head,  
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and  
cries;  
“Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not  
dead;  
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,  
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies  
A tear some Dream has loosened from his  
brain.”  
Lost Angel<sup>22</sup> of a ruined Paradise !<sup>23</sup>

---

20. Who mourn their lot? Why do they mourn?

21. One what?

22. Who was the lost Angel?

23. From what ruined Paradise was she lost? Note the perfect phrases  
of this stanza, “the silken fringe of his faint eye.”

## Adonais

She knew not 'twas her own; as with no  
stain  
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its  
rain.

One<sup>24</sup> from a lucid urn of starry dew  
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;  
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw  
The wreath upon him,<sup>25</sup> like an anadem,  
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;  
Another in her wilful grief would break  
Her bow and wingèd reeds,<sup>26</sup> as if to stem  
A greater loss with one which was more  
weak;  
And dull the barbèd fire<sup>27</sup> against his frozen  
cheek.

Another Splendor<sup>28</sup> on his mouth alit,  
That mouth, whence it<sup>29</sup> was wont to draw  
the breath  
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded  
wit,

---

24. Another Dream.

25. The Loves weeping for Adonis had their hair shorn for him. The wreath is not of hair.

26. What are her "wingèd reeds"?

27. What was the "barbèd fire" she would dull?

28. Another poetic inspiration, a poetic imagining or Dream that Keats had had.

29. What "was wont to draw the breath"?

## Adonais

And pass into the panting heart beneath  
With lightning and with music: the damp  
death

Quenched its <sup>30</sup> caress upon his icy lips;  
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath  
Of moonlight vapor, which the cold night  
clips, <sup>31</sup>

It flushed through his pale limbs, and past to  
its eclipse. <sup>32</sup>

And others came . . . Desires and Adora-  
tions,

Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,  
Splendors, and Gloom, and glimmering  
Incarnations.

Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;  
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,  
And Pleasure, <sup>33</sup> blind with tears, led by the  
gleam

Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,  
Came in slow pomp; — the moving pomp  
might seem

Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

---

30. Whose caress?

31. Embraces.

32. What "passed to its eclipse"? What is meant by passing to its  
eclipse?

33. Note these personifications which come as did the Loves to weep  
for Adonais. The last line of this stanza is a most exquisite simile to those  
who have seen the pageant.

## Adonais

All he had loved, and molded into thought,  
From shape, and hue, and odor, and sweet  
sound,  
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought  
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair  
unbound,  
Wet with the tears which should adorn the  
ground,  
Dimmed the aërial eyes that kindle day;  
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,  
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,  
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in  
their dismay.

Lost Echo<sup>34</sup> sits amid the voiceless moun-  
tains,  
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,  
And will no more reply to winds or foun-  
tains,  
Or amorous birds perched on the young  
green spray,  
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;  
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear  
Than those for whose disdain she pined  
away

---

34. The nymph Echo was deeply in love with the beautiful Narcissus and when she found her love was not returned she pined away till nothing but her voice remained. She now declines to return any sounds since she can not mimic longer the songs of Keats.

## Adonais

Into a shadow of all sounds:— a drear  
Murmur, between their songs, is all the wood-  
men hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and  
she threw down  
Her kindling buds,<sup>35</sup> as if she Autumn were,  
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is  
flown  
For whom should she have waked the sullen  
year?

To Phœbus was not Hyacinth<sup>36</sup> so dear  
Nor to himself Narcissus,<sup>37</sup> as to both  
Thou Adonais: wan they stand and sere  
Amid the faint companions of their youth,  
With dew all turned to tears; odor, to sigh-  
ing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale  
Mourns not her mate with such melodious  
pain;  
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale

35. What is meant by “*kindling buds*”?

36. Hyacinth was a beautiful youth whom Apollo loved, but accidentally killed while playing quoits with him. From his blood sprang the flower that bears his name and has inscribed on its petals *ai ai* which was the Greek exclamation of sorrow, alas! alas!

37. Narcissus, beautiful youth, fell in love with his own image which he saw reflected in a fountain. Unable to kiss his image he pined away until nothing was left but the flower, the narcissus or daffodil.

## Adonais

Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's  
domain

Her mighty youth with morning, doth com-  
plain,

Soaring and screaming round her empty  
nest,

As Albion <sup>38</sup> wails for thee: the curse of Cain  
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent  
breast, <sup>39</sup>

And scared the angel soul that was its  
earthly guest!

Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,  
But grief returns with the revolving year;  
The airs and streams renew their joyous  
tone;

The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;  
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead  
seasons' bier;

The amorous birds now pair in every brake,  
And build their mossy homes in field and  
brere; <sup>40</sup>

And the green lizard, and the golden snake,

---

38. England. In the lament for Bion all the cities mourn for him.

39. An allusion to the British critics and reviewers.

40. Briar. Like Tennyson, Shelley feels grief coming afresh with the  
revolving year.

## Adonais

Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance  
awake.

Through wood and stream and field and  
hill and Ocean  
A quickening life from the Earth's heart  
has burst  
As it has ever done, with change and  
motion,  
From the great morning of the world when  
first  
God dawned on Chaos; in its <sup>41</sup> stream im-  
mersed  
The lamps of Heaven <sup>42</sup> flash with a softer  
light;  
All baser things pant with life's sacred  
thirst;  
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's de-  
light,  
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd  
might.

The leprous corpse <sup>43</sup> touched by this spirit  
tender  
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;

---

41. In whose stream?

42. What are the lamps of heaven?

43. What is the "Leprous corpse"?

## Adonais

Like incarnations of the stars,<sup>44</sup> when splendor

Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death

And mock the merry worm<sup>45</sup> that wakes beneath.

Nought we know, dies.<sup>46</sup> Shall that alone which knows<sup>47</sup>

Be as a sword consumed before the sheath  
By sightless<sup>48</sup> lightning? — th' intense atom<sup>49</sup> glows

A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,  
But for our grief, as if it had not been,  
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!

Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene

The actors or spectators? Great and mean

Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.<sup>50</sup>

---

44. What are these "incarnations of the stars"?

45. Why the "merry worm"? What is the "merry worm"?

46. Nothing is destroyed, annihilated.

47. That alone which has the power to know.

48. Invisible.

49. The soul, the intellect.

50. Death alone is real. It lends even our lives to us.

## Adonais

As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,  
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,  
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

*He* will awake no more, oh, never more!  
“Wake thou,” cried Misery, “childless Mother,<sup>51</sup> rise  
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart’s core,  
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs.”  
And all the Dreams that watched Urania’s eyes,  
And all the Echoes whom their sister’s song<sup>52</sup>  
Had held in holy silence, cried: “Arise!”  
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,  
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendor sprung.  
She rose<sup>53</sup> like an autumnal Night, that springs

---

51. Urania.

52. The one who “rekindled all the fading melodies,” in the first stanza.

53. Who rose?

## Adonais

Out of the East, and follows wild and drear  
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,  
Even as ghost abandoning a bier,  
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and  
fear  
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;  
So saddened round her like an atmosphere  
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way  
Even to the mournful place where Adonais  
lay.

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,  
Through camps and cities rough with stone,  
and steel,  
And human hearts, which to her airy tread  
Yielding not, wounded the invisible  
Palms<sup>54</sup> of her tender feet where'er they  
fell:  
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more  
sharp than they  
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,  
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears  
of May,  
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving  
way.

In the death chamber for a moment Death

---

54. Shelley uses this word in the same connection in another place.

## Adonais

Shamed by the presence of that living  
Might<sup>55</sup>

Blushed to annihilation, and the breath  
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light  
Flashed through those limbs, so late her  
dear delight.

“Leave me not wild and drear and com-  
fortless,  
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!  
Leave me not!” cried Urania: her distress  
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and  
met her vain caress.

“Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;  
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;  
And in my heartless breast and burning  
brain  
That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else  
survive,  
With food of saddest memory kept alive,  
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part  
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give  
All that I am to be as thou now art!  
But I am chained to Time, and can not thence  
depart! <sup>56</sup>

---

55. Who is the “living might”?

56. Urania being a goddess must exist for all time and can not follow Keats. In the old legends the immortality of the gods was frequently the source of trouble when they fell in love with mortals.

## Adonais

“Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,  
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of  
men

Too soon, and with weak hands though  
mighty heart

Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?<sup>57</sup>

Defenseless as thou wert, oh where was  
then

Wisdom the mirrored shield,<sup>58</sup> or scorn the  
spear ?<sup>59</sup>

Or hadst thou waited the full cycle,<sup>60</sup> when  
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent  
sphere,

The monsters of life's waste<sup>61</sup> had fled from  
thee like deer.

“The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;  
The obscene<sup>62</sup> ravens, clamorous o'er the  
dead;

The vultures to the conqueror's banner true  
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,

---

57. The savage critic.

58. When Perseus fought the dragon he gazed steadily at his magic  
shield.

59. The magic spear, a touch of which caused death. Why could  
Keats not have had the wisdom or discretion to care nothing for the crit-  
ics or to have killed them by his scorn?

60. Lived to full maturity.

61. Again, the critics.

62. Ill-omened, repulsive.

## Adonais

And whose wings rain contagion; — how  
they fled,  
When like Apollo,<sup>63</sup> from his golden bow,  
The Pythian<sup>64</sup> of the age one arrow sped  
And smiled! — The spoilers tempt no sec-  
ond blow,  
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them  
lying low.

“The sun comes forth, and many reptiles  
spawn;  
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then  
Is gathered into death without a dawn,  
And the immortal stars awake again;  
So is it in the world of living men:  
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight  
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and  
when  
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared  
its light  
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit’s awful  
night.”

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shep-  
herds<sup>65</sup> came,

---

63. Apollo slew the great serpent Python and so is called the Pythian.

64. Lord Byron, who being severely criticised as Keats was, wrote *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a scathing poem, the one arrow with which he dispatched the whole clan of critics.

65. Who are the “mountain shepherds”?

## Adonais

Their garlands sere, their magic mantles  
rent;<sup>66</sup>

The Pilgrim of Eternity,<sup>67</sup> whose fame  
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,  
An early but enduring monument,  
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song  
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne<sup>68</sup> sent  
The sweetest lyrist<sup>69</sup> of her saddest wrong,<sup>70</sup>  
And love taught grief to fall like music from  
his tongue.

Midst others of less note, came one frail  
Form,<sup>71</sup>

A phantom among men; companionless  
As the last cloud of an expiring storm  
Whose thunder is its knell;<sup>72</sup> he, as I guess,

---

66. Why should their garlands be sere and their magic mantles rent ?

67. This is Lord Byron. He was confessedly the hero of his own poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. As a matter of fact Byron felt no personal grief at the death of Keats and in one of his poems he jeered at the fellow who let himself "be snuffed out by an article."

68. Ierne is Ireland. It was called Iverna by the ancients.

69. Thomas Moore who wrote the *Irish Melodies*.

70. This may mean the death of Robert Emmet, though Moore sang of many wrongs.

71. Shelley himself. This and the two stanzas following are Shelley's characterization of himself. Of them Stopford Brooke says: "There is nothing in English poetry so steeped in passionate personality. . . . It is almost too close, too unveiled, too intense to have been written." Shelley says elsewhere: "As a man I shrink from notice and regard; the ebb and flow of the world vexes me: I desire to be left in peace. Persecution, contumely and calumny have been heaped upon me in profuse measure."

72. Notice the vivid simile.

## Adonais

Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like;<sup>73</sup> and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilder-  
ness,  
And his own thoughts,<sup>74</sup> along that rugged  
way,  
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and  
their prey.

A pardlike<sup>75</sup> spirit beautiful and swift —  
A Love in desolation masked; — a Power  
Girt round with weakness; — it can scarce  
uplift  
The weight of the superincumbent hour;  
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
A breaking billow; — even whilst we speak  
Is it not broken? On the withering flower  
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek  
The life can burn in blood, even while the  
heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies<sup>76</sup> over-  
blown,

---

73. Actæon gazed on Diana at her bath and the goddess changed him to a stag, in which form he was hunted by his own hounds and by them torn to pieces.

74. He had tried to fathom the mysteries of Nature till his mind was dismayed by his failure.

75. Leopard-like.

76. His crown contains pansies whose language is memory, violets

## Adonais

And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;

And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,

Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew

Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,

Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart

Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew

He came the last, neglected and apart;

A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.<sup>77</sup>

All<sup>78</sup> stood aloof, and at his<sup>79</sup> partial moan<sup>80</sup>  
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band

Who in another's fate now wept his own;<sup>81</sup>

As in the accents of an unknown land,

He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned  
The Stranger's mien, and murmured:

“Who art thou?”

---

that speak of modesty and his retiring spirit; the cypress cone that tops his spear means mourning and ivy is for friendship.

77. “Let the stricken deer go weep.”

78. All of whom?

79. Whose?

80. Why “*partial moan*”?

81. Keats died in February, 1821; in April, 1822, Shelley was drowned.

## Adonais

He answered not, but with a sudden pang  
Made bare his branded and ensanguined  
brow,  
Which was like Cain's<sup>82</sup> or Christ's<sup>83</sup> — Oh!  
that it should be so!

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?  
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle  
thrown?

What form leans sadly o'er the white death-  
bed,

In mockery of monumental stone,  
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?  
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,<sup>84</sup>  
Taught, soothed, loved, honored the de-  
parted one;

Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs  
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

Our Adonais has drunk poison — oh!

What deaf and viperous murderer<sup>85</sup> could  
crown

---

82. The mark of reprobation—so his enemies might think.

83. The mark of persecution, his friends might feel.

84. Leigh Hunt, one of Keats's earliest friends. It was John Severn, though, who was most faithful and who watched over the poet's dying bed. Shelley says he did not know of this fact when the lines were written.

85. The Quarterly reviewer again. In his preface he, Shelley, says of one "Nor shall it be your excuse, that murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers but used none."

## Adonais

Life's early cup with such a draught o' woe?  
The nameless worm would now itself disown:

It felt, yet could escape the magic tone  
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,

But what was howling in one breast alone,  
Silent with expectation of the song,  
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre  
unstrung.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!  
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,  
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!  
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!  
And ever at thy season be thou free  
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:  
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to  
thee;

Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,  
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—  
as now.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled  
Far from these carrion kites that scream  
below;  
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;  
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting  
now.—

## Adonais

Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall  
flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it  
came,  
A portion of the Eternal,<sup>86</sup> which must glow  
Through time and change, unquenchably  
the same,  
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth  
of shame.

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not  
sleep—  
He hath awakened from the dream of life—  
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife;  
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's  
knife  
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay  
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief  
Convulse us and consume us day by day,  
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our  
living clay.  
He has outsoared the shadow of our night;  
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,  
And that unrest which men miscall delight,

---

86. The doctrine called pantheism which Tennyson denies, as will be remembered in one of the Lyrics of *In Memoriam*.

## Adonais

Can touch him not and torture not again;  
From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
He is secure, and now can never mourn  
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in  
vain;

Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to  
burn,

With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes — 'tis Death is dead, not  
he;

Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn  
Turn all thy dew to splendor, for from thee  
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;  
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!  
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and  
thou Air

Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst  
thrown

O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare  
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its  
despair!

He is made one with Nature:<sup>87</sup> there is heard  
His voice in all her music, from the moan  
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet  
bird;

---

87. Compare Shelley's idea of the future life with Tennyson's. Which shows the deeper feeling, the keener love for a friend?

## Adonais

He is a presence to be felt and known  
In darkness and in light, from herb and  
stone,  
Spreading itself where'er that Power may  
move  
Which has withdrawn his being to its own:  
Which wields the world with never wearied  
love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it  
above.

He is a portion of the loveliness  
Which once he made more lovely: he doth  
bear  
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world, com-  
pelling there,  
All new successions to the forms they wear;  
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its  
flight  
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;  
And bursting in its beauty and its might  
From trees and beasts and men into the  
Heaven's light.

The splendors of the firmament of time  
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;

## Adonais

Like stars to their appointed height they  
climb

And death is a low mist which can not blot  
The brightness it may veil. When lofty  
thought

Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,  
And love and life contend in it, for what  
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there  
And move like winds of light on dark and  
stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown<sup>88</sup>  
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal  
thought,

Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton<sup>89</sup>  
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not  
Yet faded from him; Sidney,<sup>90</sup> as he fought  
And as he fell and as he lived and loved  
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,  
Arose; and Lucan,<sup>91</sup> by his death approved:

---

88. Keats is no longer "one with Nature" but is among the others who have been cut off before their fame was full.

89. Thomas Chatterton was born in 1752. In his brief life he showed most unmistakable genius and deceived all the critics of the day by his imitations of ancient manuscripts. Poor and unfortunate, nearly starved, he committed suicide before he was eighteen. Wordsworth calls him  
"the marvelous boy,

The sleepless soul that perished in his pride."

To him Keats dedicated his *Endymion*, the poem that most attracted Shelley.

90. Sir Philip Sidney.

91. Lucan was a Roman poet who, conspiring against Nero, was condemned to death by poison, but it is related that he bled himself to death.

## Adonais

Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing  
reproved.

And many more, whose names on Earth  
are dark,

But whose transmitted effluence can not die  
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,  
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality:

“Thou art become as one of us,” they cry,  
“It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long  
Swung blind in unascended majesty,  
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.

Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper<sup>92</sup> of  
our throng!”

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth  
Fond wretch!<sup>93</sup> and know thyself and him  
aright.

Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous  
Earth;<sup>94</sup>

As from a center, dart thy spirit’s light  
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might  
Satiate the void circumference:<sup>95</sup> then shrink

---

His poem, *Pharsalia*, telling the story of the civil war between Cæsar and Pompey was left unfinished.

92. The evening star, Venus.

93. That is, whosoever mourns for Adonais.

94. What is meant by this line?

95. What is the meaning of satiate? Why the “void circumference”?

## Adonais

Even to a point within our day and night;  
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee  
sink<sup>96</sup>

When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee  
to the brink.

Or go to Rome,<sup>97</sup> which is the sepulcher  
O, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis naught  
That ages, empires, and religions there  
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;  
For such as he can lend,<sup>98</sup> — they borrowed  
not

Glory from those who made the world their  
prey;

And he is gathered to the kings of thought  
Who waged contention with their time's  
decay,

And of the past are all that can not pass away.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,  
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;  
And where its wrecks like shattered moun-  
tains rise,  
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses  
dress

---

96. What should make thee sink? Why should he who mourns for Keats "sink" when he realizes how small a part of the universe this world is?

97. Who is to go to Rome?

98. What is it Keats can lend?

## Adonais

The bones of Desolation's nakedness  
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead  
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access<sup>99</sup>  
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,  
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is  
spread.  
And gray walls molder round, on which dull  
Time  
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;  
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,<sup>100</sup>  
Pavilions the dust of him who planned  
This refuge for his memory, doth stand  
Like flame transformed to marble; and  
beneath,  
A field is spread, on which a newer band  
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp  
of death  
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extin-  
guished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young  
as yet

---

99. The Protestant Cemetery of Rome which lies on the slope of a hill near the foot of which both Keats and Shelley lie.

100. This is a very true description of the surroundings. The cemetery lies near the old wall of the city and just at hand is the pyramid of Caius Cestius, a conspicuous piece of architecture erected to the memory of a man who has been entirely forgotten. The graves of the cemetery are all of a "newer band" as even the date of the pyramid is uncertain.

## Adonais

To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned

Its charge to each;<sup>101</sup> and if the seal is set,  
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,  
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find  
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,  
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter  
wind

Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.

What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and  
pass;<sup>102</sup>

Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,<sup>103</sup>  
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,  
If thou wouldst be with that which thou  
dost seek!

Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure  
sky,

Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are  
weak

---

101. The cemetery had but recently been set apart and two years before Shelley had buried his infant son William there.

102. A return to the pantheistic doctrine. The eternal nature remains. The many human beings may die and change back to the one from which they came.

103. Note the simile. Is it all clear to you?

## Adonais

The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?

Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here

They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!

A light is past from the revolving year,  
And man, and woman; and what still is dear  
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.

The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;

'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,  
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move,

That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse  
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love

Which through the web of being blindly wove

By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of

## Adonais

The fire for which all thirst; now beams  
on me,  
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in  
song

Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,  
Far from the shore, far from the trembling  
throng

Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
The massy earth and spher'd skies are riven!  
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;  
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of  
Heaven,

The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal  
are.<sup>104</sup>

---

104. How like a prophecy of the poet's death this stanza seems! The figure he uses can but call up that blinding tempest in which his boat went down. He joined the host of the Eternal, the immortal.

## Studies

1. Compare *Lycidas* and *Adonais* in sentiment and style. Determine in which the poet seems the more sincere in his grief and in which the structure of the poem is the more perfect. Then compare the two with *Threnodia*. Do you feel that in the last the poet's heart was really wrung with grief? In the first two mentioned would you say that the poets were more anxious to write perfect poems than to express their grief at the loss of friends?
2. In what respect is Gray's *Elegy* radically different from the other elegies quoted?
3. Is the classic elegy as good a medium for the expression of grief as the more natural verse of Lowell and Tennyson?
4. Is it your opinion, based on your studies in poetry, that the free use of classical allusions gives beauty to a poem? In *Threnodia*, Lowell makes no use of classical allusions, but elsewhere in his writings he shows a profound knowledge of them. Can you see any good reason for thinking that he omitted them from the elegy intentionally?
5. The charge of insincerity is sometimes made against the writers of two of these elegies. Can you point to specific instances that you think may justify such a charge?

# Sonnets



LONGFELLOW'S HOME AT CAMBRIDGE





## The Sonnet

---

The sonnet may be addressed to any person or thing and is the direct personal expression of the author's feeling. It is like the ode, and also partakes of the general nature of the elegy but it differs from both in the rigidity of the rules of form that govern it. One of the most perfect sonnets is that of Milton,

### On His Own Blindness

---

When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, less he returning, chide;  
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”  
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent  
That murmur soon replies “God doth not need

## On His Own Blindness

Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who  
best

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.  
His state

Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait."

What is the meter of the first verse? Of the second? Of the third? Is it the same to the end? How many verses are there? What verses rhyme with the first? What with the second? How many different rhymes are there in the first eight verses? What verse rhymes with the ninth? With the tenth? With the eleventh? Write out the rhyme scheme and study it till you are familiar with it.

Consider the thought. What is meant by "my light is spent"? "Ere half my days" — Milton was about forty-four years of age when he was stricken with blindness and after this time he wrote his great epic, *Paradise Lost*. What is "that one talent"? Why would it be useless? Was Milton really "bent to serve his Maker" with that one talent? He devoted his life to the composition of the great epic. What does he mean by presenting his "true account"? Of what is it he wishes to give an account? What allusion is there in this reference to the one talent? What was the parable of the talents? Why should he say "returning"?

## Victor and Vanquished

Whence does he return? Who is "He"? Who asks the question "Doth God exact day-labor"? What is the grammatical relation of "light denied" to the rest of the sentence? Why should he ask "fondly"? To prevent what murmur does Patience reply? To what word does the "his" in the tenth line refer? Whose mild yoke? Who serve him best? What is the meaning of "post"? With what thought does the sonnet begin? Does it contain more than one idea? What part of the sonnet is devoted to the question? What to the answer?

Read the sonnet through several times noticing the harmony and beauty of thought and expression.

## Victor and Vanquished

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

As one who long hath fled with panting breath  
Before his foe, bleeding and near to fall,  
I turn and set my back against the wall,  
And look thee in the face, triumphant Death.  
I call for aid, and no one answereth;  
I am alone with thee, who conquerest all;  
Yet me thy threatening form doth not appal,  
For thou art but a phantom and a wraith;  
Wounded and weak, sword broken at the  
hilt,

## Victor and Vanquished

With armor shattered, and without a shield,  
I stand unmoved; do with me what thou  
wilt;

I can resist no more, but will not yield.

This is no tournament where cowards tilt;  
The vanquished here is victor of the field.

How many verses in this sonnet? What is the meter? Compare the meter with that of the preceding sonnet. What is the rhyme scheme? Wherein does the rhyme scheme differ from that of the preceding sonnet? Through how many lines is the rhyme scheme the same as that in Milton's sonnet?

Is there a unity of thought in this sonnet? Does the poet consistently allude to something, as Milton did to the parable of the talents? Was Longfellow old or young when he wrote this? What does Longfellow represent himself to be? Why does he "set his back against the wall"? In these days of Mauser rifles would it do any good to set one's back against the wall for protection against an approaching enemy? Was it ever an advantage? Who is the foe that follows him? How can Death be "but a phantom and a wraith" and at the same time follow the poet triumphantly? What do his weapons and his armor indicate as to what he represents himself? What is the "broken sword"? Who fight in tournaments? What is

## Composed upon the Beach Near Calais

there appropriate in the word “tilt”? How can the one who is vanquished be still the victor? Is the figure of Mediæval knighthood well sustained?

## Composed upon the Beach Near Calais

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;  
The holy time is quiet as a nun  
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea.  
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder everlasting.  
Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me  
here,  
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,  
Thy nature is not therefore less divine.  
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
And worship'st at the temple's inner shrine,  
God being with thee when we know it not.

Compare this in meter and in rhyme with the two preceding sonnets. Is there unity of thought in this? Do the first eight lines differ in thought from the last six? Which group contains the more general thought?

## The Sonnet

Study the following sonnets in the same manner to determine the form which the poet must follow. It will be seen that the sonnet is a short lyric of fourteen verses of iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is found to vary though these variations are more infrequent in the first eight lines, into which it is not common to introduce more than two rhymes and they usually arrange themselves *abbaabba* though a rather common form is alternate *abab* or *ababbaba*. The last six lines vary greatly.

Shakespeare preferred *ababcdcdefefgg* which it will be seen is a wide departure from the type of Milton. The form Spenser used is called the link sonnet and runs *ababbcbccdcdee*. Sonnets have been written in which the rhyme runs in couplets from beginning to end, in others the lines rhyme in threes to the thirteenth which forms a couplet with the last. Other forms are *aabcbcdd-efefgg*, *ababbccdedeeff*, *aabbcccddeeffff*.

Sonnets originated in Italy and the genuine Italian sonnet is very exacting. The lines had eleven syllables and the rhymes were feminine, that is, the final two syllables rhymed. There were fourteen lines divided into two groups, the first of which consisted of eight lines and was called the *octave*. This had two *quatrains* or *basi*. The remainder of the sonnet was the *sestet* which contained two *tersets* or *volte*. The quatrains rhymed *abba* or *abab* and were usually alike though some-

## The Sonnet

times *ababbaba*. The tercets were usually *cdc*, *dcd*, or *cdecde* though other forms were allowable. The thought of the octave was general while that of the sestet was specific, or the latter formed the conclusion of the former, the whole sonnet containing but one idea. It is interesting to note how influential the classic Italian or Petrarchan sonnet has been on the work of the English poets.

The difficulties of composition under such arbitrary limitations are evident, and it is not to be wondered at that even famous poets have utterly failed when they have essayed to write in this form. The sonnet has met with severest criticism, some writers failing to see any beauty in it. Coleridge says: "And when at last the poor thing is tormented and hammered into fit shape, it is in general racked and tortured prose rather than anything resembling poetry." Though Lord Byron wrote a few himself he defined the sonnet as "The most pungent, petrifying, stupidly Platonic composition."

But this is hardly fair to the many exquisitely beautiful lyrics that in this form grace the English language. Those "little pictures painted well," those "monuments of a moment" are among our most graceful poems and the reader who has not learned to delight in a beautiful sonnet has missed the most refined pleasure English literature has to give.

The poets have been successful in writing some very pretty sonnets upon the sonnet.

## The Sonnet

R. W. GILDER

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the pearly shell  
That murmurs of the far-off murmuring sea;  
A precious jewel carved most curiously;  
It is a little picture painted well.

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the tear that fell  
From a great poet's hidden ecstasy;  
A two-edged sword, a star, a song—ah me,  
Sometimes a heavy-tolling funeral bell.

This was the flame that shook with Dante's  
breath;

The solemn organ whereon Milton played,  
And the clear glass where Shakespeare's  
shadow falls:

A sea this is,—beware who ventureth.  
For like a fiord the narrow floor is laid  
Mid-ocean deep to the sheer mountain walls.

---

NOTE.—The sonnet *What Is a Sonnet?* is printed by permission of The Century Company, authorized publishers of the poems of R. W. Gilder.

## The Sonnet

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Scorn not the sonnet. Critic, you have frowned,

Mindless of its just honors. With this key  
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody  
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's<sup>1</sup>  
wound;

A thousand times this pipe did Tasso<sup>2</sup> sound;

With it Camoens<sup>3</sup> soothed an exile's grief;  
The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle-leaf

Amid the cypress with which Dante<sup>4</sup> crowned  
His visionary brow; a glow-worm lamp,

It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairy-  
land

To struggle through dark ways; and when a  
damp

Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
Soul-animating strains,—alas! too few.

---

1. Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). An Italian poet whose fame rests chiefly on his love songs. Most of these, including many sonnets, are addressed to Laura, his lady love.

2. Torquato Tasso (1554-1595), a famous Italian epic poet. He died in Rome while preparations were being made to give him a laurel crown.

3. Luis de Camoens (1524-1579) most celebrated poet of Portugal. He celebrated in an epic poem the voyage of Vasco de Gama to the East Indies.

4. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) the most celebrated of Italian poets and the author of the great epic *Divina Commedia*.

## The Sonnet

D. G. ROSSETTI

A sonnet is a moment's monument,—  
Memorial from the soul's eternity  
To one dead, deathless hour. Look that  
it be,  
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,  
Of its own arduous fullness reverent;  
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,  
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see  
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.  
A sonnet is a coin: its face reveals  
The soul,—it's converse to what Power  
't is due,—  
Whether for tribute to the august appeals  
Of life, or dower in Love's high retinue,  
It serve; or 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous  
breath.  
In Charon's<sup>1</sup> palm it pays the toll to Death.

---

1. Acheron was a dark and deep stream across which the souls of the dead must be ferried to reach the realm of Pluto. Charon, an aged man, plied the only ferry, a leaky boat, and charged an obolus for passage-money. If this were not available the weary soul must wait a hundred years.

## Cupid in Distress

The collection following contains some of the best sonnets of the language, which will give variety to the reading and show the flexibility of this form of lyric. Love is a frequent source of inspiration and has been directly or indirectly the topic on which the largest number of sonnets has been written.

## Cupid in Distress

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Silent as one who treads on new-fallen snow,  
Love came upon me ere I was aware;  
Not light of heart, for there was troublous  
care

Upon his eyelids, drooping them full low,  
As with sad memory of a healed woe;  
The cold rain shivered in his golden hair,  
As if an outcast lot had been his share,  
And he seemed doubtful whither he should  
go:

Then he fell on my neck, and, in my breast  
Hiding his face, awhile sobbed bitterly,  
As half in grief to be so long distrest,  
And half in joy at his security —  
At last, uplooking from his place of rest,  
His eyes shone blessedness and hope on me.

## The Sonnet

Shakespeare was the writer of numerous beautiful sonnets, many of which he linked together so that he had a succession of them upon the same theme. This is one of the best:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never  
shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his  
height be taken;  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and  
cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and  
weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ nor no man ever loved.

THE STUDY IN LOWELL'S HOME





## Sonnets from the Portuguese

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

### I.

I thought once how Theocritus<sup>1</sup> had sung  
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for  
years,  
Who each one in a gracious hand appears  
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:  
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,  
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,—  
Those of my own life, who by turns had  
flung  
A shadow across me. Straightway I was  
'ware,  
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move  
Behind me, and drew me backward by the  
hair;  
And a voice said in mastery while I strove,—  
“Guess now who holds thee?” —“Death,”  
I said. But, there,  
The silver answer rang —“Not Death, but  
Love.”

---

1. A Greek poet living about twenty-six years before Christ. There are some 30 idylls attributed to him.

Sonnets from the Portuguese

XXVII.

My own beloved, who hast lifted me  
From this drear flat of earth where I was  
thrown,  
And in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown  
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully  
Shines out again, as all the angels see,  
Before thy saving kiss. My own, my own,  
Who camest to me when the world was gone,  
And I who looked for only God, found thee.  
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.  
As one who stands in dewless asphodel,  
Looks backward on the tedious time he had  
In the upper-life—so I, with bosom swell,  
Make witness, here, between the good and  
bad,  
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as  
well.

## Keats's Last Sonnet

---

The following sonnet is thought to be the best of those written by John Keats. The fact that it was his last sonnet gives it a touching interest.

Bright Star, would I were steadfast as thou art.

Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,

Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,  
The moving waters at their priestlike task

Of pure ablutions round earth's human shore,

Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask

Of snow upon the mountains and the moors:

No, yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,

Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,

To feel forever its soft fall and swell

Awake forever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,

And so live ever, or else swoon to death.

## Night and Death

The next three are related in thought. The first is by Joseph Blanco White and is regarded in all respects as one of the most perfect. It is frequently quoted as being all that a sonnet should be.

## Night and Death

Mysterious night ! when our first parent knew  
Thee from report divine, and heard thy  
name,

Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue ?

Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,

Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,  
Hesperus<sup>1</sup> with the host of heaven came,  
And, lo, creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay  
concealed

Within thy beams, O Sun ! or who could  
find,

Whilst flower and leaf and insect stood re-  
vealed,

That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us  
blind ?

Why do we, then, shun death with anxious  
strife ?

If light can so deceive us, wherefore not life ?

---

1. Evening star. Vesper-Venus.

## Sleep

SAMUEL DANIEL

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,  
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born:  
Relieve my anguish and restore the light;  
With dark forgetting of my care, return,  
And let the day be time enough to mourn  
The ship-wreck of my ill-adventured youth:  
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn  
Without the torment of the night's untruth.  
Cease, dreams, the images of day desires,  
To model forth the passions of the morrow:  
Never let rising sun approve you liars,  
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.  
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,  
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

## Night

ALFRED TENNYSON

The night hath climbed her peak of highest noon,  
And bitter blasts the screaming Autumn whirl,  
All night through archways of the bridged pearl,  
And portals of pure silver, walks the moon.  
Walk on, my soul, nor crouch to agony,  
Turn cloud to light, and bitterness to joy,  
And dross to gold with glorious alchemy,  
Basing thy throne above the world's annoy.  
Reign thou above the storms of sorrow and ruth  
That war beneath; unshaken peace hath won thee;  
So shalt thou pierce the woven glooms of truth;  
So shall the blessing of the meek be on thee;  
So in thine hour of dawn, the body's youth,  
An honorable old age shall come upon thee.

## Personal Talk

Here follow a number that are personal or literary in their nature and it is interesting to compare the subjective element in each, to see how much and in what way the author reveals himself.

## Personal Talk

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

### I.

I am not one who much or oft delight  
To season my fireside with personal talk  
Of friends who live within an easy walk,  
Or neighbors daily, weekly, in my sight;  
And, for my chance-acquaintance, ladies  
bright,  
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,  
These all wear out of me, like forms with  
chalk,  
Painted on rich men's floors for one feast-night.  
Better than such discourse doth silence long,  
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;  
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,  
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,  
And listen to the flapping of the flame,  
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

## Personal Talk

### II.

Wings have we; and as far as we can go  
We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,  
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood  
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.  
Dreams, books, are each a world, and books,  
    we know,  
Are a substantial world, both pure and good:  
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and  
    blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.  
There find I personal themes, a plenteous  
    store,  
Matter wherein right voluble I am,  
To which I listen with a ready ear;  
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear—  
The gentle lady married to the Moor;<sup>1</sup>  
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Shakespeare's *Othello*.

2. Spenser's *The Faery Queene*.

## Personal Talk

### III.

Nor can I not believe but that hereby  
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote  
From evil-speaking; rancor, never sought,  
Comes to me not, malignant truth, or lie.  
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I  
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joy-  
ous thought.

And thus from day to day my little boat  
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.  
Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,  
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares —  
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs  
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays !  
Oh ! might my name be numbered among  
theirs,  
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

## Reading

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

As one who on some well-known landscape  
looks,

Be it alone, or with some dear friend nigh,  
Each day beholdeth fresh variety,  
New harmonies of hills, and trees, and  
brooks —

So is it with the worthiest choice of books,  
And oftenest read: if thou no meaning spy,  
Deem there is meaning wanting in thine eyes;  
We are so lured from judgment by the crooks  
And winding ways of covert fantasy,  
Or turned unwittingly down beaten tracks  
Of our foregone conclusions, that we see,  
In our own want, the writer's misdeemed lacks:  
It is with true books as with Nature, each  
New day of living doth new insight teach.

## The Poet

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Far 'yond this narrow parapet of Time,  
With eyes uplift, the poet's soul should look  
Into the Endless Promise, nor should brook  
One prying doubt to shake his faith sublime;  
To him the earth is ever in her prime  
And dewiness of morning; he can see  
Good lying hid, from all eternity,  
Within the teeming womb of sin and crime;  
His soul shall not be cramped by any bar —  
His nobleness should be so God-like high  
That his least deed is perfect as a star,  
His common look majestic as the sky,  
And all o'erflooded with a light from far,  
Undimmed by clouds of weak mortality.

## The Old Poets

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

If some small savor creep into my rhyme  
Of the old poets, if some words I use,  
Neglected long, which have the lusty thews  
Of that gold-haired and earnest-hearted time,  
Whose loving joy and sorrow all sublime  
Have given our tongue its starry eminence,—  
It is not pride, God knows, but reverence  
Which hath grown in me since my childhood's  
prime;

Wherein I feel that my poor lyre is strung  
With soul-strings like to theirs, and that I have  
No right to muse their holy graves among,  
If I can be a custom-fettered slave,  
And, in mine own true spirit, am not brave  
To speak what rusheth upward to my tongue.

## Mosgiel Farm

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

“There!” said a stripling, pointing with meet  
pride

Towards a low roof with green trees half con-  
cealed,

“Is Mosgiel Farm; and that’s the very field  
Where Burns plowed up the daisy.” Far and  
wide

A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried  
Above sea-clouds, the peaks of Arran rose;  
And, by that simple notice, the repose  
Of earth, sky, sea, and air was vivified.

Beneath “the random *bield* of clod or stone”  
Myriads of daisies have shown forth in flower  
Near the lark’s nest, and in their natural hour  
Have passed away; less happy than the one  
That, by the unwilling plowshare, died to  
prove

The tender charm of poetry and love.

## William Shakespeare

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one  
Spake, might the word be said that might  
speak Thee.

Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields,  
mountains, yea, the sea,  
What power is in them all to praise the sun ?  
His praise is this,— he can be praised of  
none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him;  
but he  
Exults not to be worshiped, but to be.  
He is; and, being, beholds his work well  
done.

All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all  
mirth,  
Are his: without him, day were night on  
earth.

Time knows not his from time's own  
period.

All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all  
lyres,  
Fall dumb before him ere one string sus-  
pires.

All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

## To the Lord General Cromwell

JOHN MILTON

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a  
cloud

Not of war only, but detractions rude,  
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,

To peace and truth thy glorious way hast  
plowed,

And on the neck of crowned fortune proud  
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work  
pursued,

While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots  
imbued,

And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,  
And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much  
remains

To conquer still; Peace hath her victories  
No less renowned than War; new foes  
arise,

Threatening to bind our souls with secular  
chains:—

Help us to save free conscience from the  
paw

Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their  
maw.

## A Sleeping Child

In the next two love in the home is celebrated, and the sleeping child is a subject that has its message for everyone. The second is printed for its homely phrase redeemed by its genuine feeling and the sweet pathos of its commonplace.

## A Sleeping Child

THOMAS HOOD

Thine eyelids slept so beauteously, I deemed  
No eyes could wake so beautiful as they;  
Thy rosy cheeks in such still slumbers lay,  
I loved their peacefulness, nor ever dreamed  
Of dimples:—for those parted lips so  
seemed,  
I never thought a smile could sweetlier  
play,  
Nor that so graceful life could chase away  
Thy graceful death,—till those blue eyes  
upbeamed.  
Now slumber lies in dimpled eddies drowned,  
And roses bloom more rosily for joy,  
And odorous silence ripens into sound,  
And fingers move to sound,— all beauteous  
boy!  
How dost thou waken into smiles, and prove,  
If not more lovely, thou art more like Love!



*JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY*



## When She Comes Home

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

When she comes home again. A thousand  
ways

I fashion, to myself, the tenderness  
Of my glad welcome; I shall tremble,—  
yes;

And touch her as when first in the old days  
I touched her girlish hand, nor dared upraise  
Mine eyes, such was my faint heart's sweet  
distress.

Then silence, and the perfume of her  
dress:

The room will sway a little, and a haze  
Clog eyesight — soulsight, even — for a space:  
And tears — yes; and the ache here in the  
throat,

To know that I so ill deserve the place  
Her arms make for me; and the sobbing  
note

I stay with kisses, ere the tearful face  
Again is hidden in the old embrace.

---

NOTE.—The sonnet *When She Comes Home* is from the Riley Love  
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## Trailing Arbutus

Of the four remaining sonnets one at least deserves first rank, while one is scarcely worthy of its place. Which of the four is to be ranked first? Which last?

## Trailing Arbutus

ALBERT LAIGHTON

Dear, lovely flower, whose fragrant lips unclose  
To breathe a benediction to the Spring,  
Soon as the bluebird and the robin sing;  
Sweetest and best that in the woodland grows;  
Flushed like the morn, or white as drifted  
snows;  
I love thee as a herald of the hours  
That bring the beauteous train of forest  
flowers,  
And all fair things God's loving hand bestows.  
But most for her sweet sake who held thee  
dear;  
Who, in glad Springs, roamed with me  
hand in hand  
These mossy paths where now alone I stray;  
And yet whose gentle presence seems so near;  
I half forget her angel feet to-day  
Walk the green pastures of the better land.

## Ozymandias

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I met a traveler from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs  
of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose  
frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions  
read  
Which yet survive (stamped on these lifeless  
things)  
The hand that mocked them and the heart  
that fed ;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:—  
My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye mighty ! and  
despair.  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and  
bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

## The Two Rivers

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Slowly the hour hand of the clock moves round;  
So slowly that no human eye hath power  
To see it move. Slowly in shine or shower  
The painted ship above it, homeward bound,  
Sails, but seems motionless, as if aground;  
Yet both arrived at last; an 'in his tower  
The slumberous watchman wakes and strikes the hour,  
A mellow, measured, melancholy sound.  
Midnight! the outpost of advancing day!  
The frontier town and citadel of night!  
The watershed of Time, from which streams  
Of Yesterday and Tomorrow take their way,  
One to the land of promise and of light,  
One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

## Composed upon Westminster Bridge<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Earth has not anything to show more fair.  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty.  
This city now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

---

1. Westminster Bridge crosses the Thames in London near the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.

## Forms of Poetry

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### I. EPICS.

1. Greater, or Heroic, Epics.
2. Lesser Epics.
  - a. Ballads.
  - b. Allegories.
  - c. Historic Epics.

### II. LYRICS.

1. Songs.
  - a. Sacred.
    - (1) Psalms.
    - (2) Hymns.
  - b. Secular.
    - (1) Patriotic.
    - (2) Convivial.
    - (3) Comic.
    - (4) Sentimental.
    - (5) Love.
2. Odes.
3. Elegies.
4. Sonnets.

### III. DRAMAS.

1. Tragedies.
2. Comedies.

# Epic Poetry



## Epic Poetry

---

The word epic is by some writers restricted in its application but it is preferred here to use it in a broad sense to include various forms of narrative poetry, and to use the term greater, or heroic, epic to designate the smaller class of narratives which the older writers knew as epics. Thomas Arnold's definition of the greater epic is: "The subject of the Epic Poem must be some one, great, complex action. The principal personages must belong to the high places of the world, and must be grand and elevated in their ideas and in their bearing. The measure must be of sonorous dignity, befitting the subject. The action is carried on by a mixture of narrative, dialogue, and soliloquy. Briefly to express its main characteristics, the epic treats of one great complex action, in grand style, and with fullness of detail."

Under such a definition there can be but few really great epics in any language. Comparatively few poets have cared to undertake so great a task and many of those who have been willing to make the attempt have failed conspicuously in the execution. But most of the great languages of the world have each one surpassing epic which has held the interest of its readers and established an immortality for itself. Homer gave the Greeks

## Epic Poetry

the grandeur of his *Iliad*; Virgil charmed the Latin race and every cultivated people since with the elegance of his *Aeneid*; Dante with Virgil for his model and Beatrice as an inspiration wrote in Italian the *Divina Commedia*, in which he described with all-powerful pen the condition of the dead in the Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise; and our Milton after years of preparation, from the dark realm of his own blindness, produced the sublime measures of *Paradise Lost*. These are the Greater Epics, greater by far than anything else written by man. With them this course does not concern itself to any great extent.

The term lesser epic includes the numerous forms of narrative poems from the old-time ballad to the modern story-telling poem. The epic is essentially different from the lyric. While in the latter the personality of the author is always apparent and properly so, in the epic the intrusion of the poet's self is usually a defect. The lyric is subjective, the epic objective. To tell a story effectively and well is the prime motive, to tell it beautifully and in a way to excite the imagination and move the feelings of the reader is the contributory poetic impulse. These ideas, then, should control the study of the poems. The story told, the incident described, is the basal consideration. In the first volume of this course we studied two narrative poems as stories merely, and if the method advocated there has

## Epic Poetry

been mastered the student will now almost unconsciously follow it as he reads. But he has now the added interests created by the study of the lyrics. He notes that in these epics the poet shows himself a keen observer of nature and introduces the results of his observation to give vividness to his description rather than for the purpose of interpreting the meaning of the phenomena about him. The flower blooms to give charm to a pastoral scene, not to furnish evidence of divine love; the "murmuring pines and hemlocks" "stand like Druids of old" as the background of a picture but they speak to man no "various language," they have for "his gayer hours" no "voice of gladness," no "smile and eloquence of beauty." God and his attributes are not the subject of direct contemplation but his ways are manifest in the working out of the plot. Beauty there is in the epic but it is the beauty of incident and the charm of description; the beauty of vivid coloring and of noble deed; the beauty of man doing, not of man thinking. There is action, too, and frequently of the most dramatic kind, for in the epic the poet draws his material from all the wide range of human activity. It is the human element that, after all is said, gives the greatest power to this class of poems. Though the supernatural is often introduced it is usually merely to lend interest to the fate of the human being.

## Ballads

---

Of these lesser epics many groups might be set apart. The ballad is the oldest form. It was originally the production of wandering minstrels or gleemen and was not reduced to writing and kept in permanent form. Being passed from mouth to mouth there naturally came to be great variations in its form, and even the incidents were modified to suit the taste of the singer. After poetry came to be a study of the cultured and refined, the minstrel's power declined though he was a welcome guest at the feasts of the wealthy where his song added to the gayety of the occasion or gave dignity to the host as his deeds were sung by the hireling bard. In the sixteenth century these singers disappeared from view in the blaze of the Elizabethan age. The north of England and the borderland of Scotland was a region that produced many ballads and among them appeared the tale of *The Three Ravens* which has survived to our day and still remains in various forms among the songs of the common people. The curious refrains running through the stanzas were the choruses often echoed by the group listening to the person who sang the lines of the narrative.

## The Three Ravens

---

There were three ravens sat on a tree,—  
Down-a-down, hey down, hey down.

There were three ravens sat on a tree,—  
With a down.

There were three ravens sat on a tree,—  
They were black as they might be:  
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

The one of them said to his mate  
Down-a-down, hey down, hey down.  
The one of them said to his mate,—  
With a down.

The one of them said to his mate—  
Where shall we our breakfast take ?  
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

Down in yonder green field  
There lies a knight slain under his shield.

His hounds they lie down at his feet  
So well they their master keep.

His hawks they fly so eagerly,  
There 's no fowl dare him come nigh.

### The Three Ravens

Down there comes a fallow doe,  
Great with young as she might go.

She lift up his bloody head,  
And kist his wounds that were so red.

She got him upon her back  
And carried him to earthen lake.

She buried him before the prime,  
She was dead ere even-time.

God send every gentleman  
Such hounds, such hawks, and such a leman.

## Helen of Kirkconnell

The story is told by Sir Walter Scott:

“A lady by the name of Helen Irving, or Bell (for this is disputed by the two clans), daughter of the Laird of Kirkconnell, in Dumfriesshire, and celebrated for her beauty, was beloved by two gentlemen in the neighborhood. The name of the favored suitor was Adam Fleming of Kirkpatrick; that of the other has escaped tradition, although it has been alleged that he was a Bell of Blackethouse. The addresses of the latter were, however, favored by the friends of the lady, and the lovers were, therefore, obliged to meet in secret, and by night, in the churchyard of Kirkconnell, a romantic spot surrounded by the river Kirtle. During one of these private interviews, the jealous and despised lover suddenly appeared on the opposite bank of the stream, and leveled his carbine at the breast of his rival. Helen threw herself before her lover, received in her bosom the bullet, and died in his arms. A desperate and mortal combat ensued between Fleming and the murderer, in which the latter was cut to pieces.”

## Helen of Kirkconnell

I wish I were where Helen lies.  
And night and day on me she cries;  
O that I were where Helen lies,  
On fair Kirkconnell lee.

Curst be the heart that thought the thought  
And cursed the hand that fired the shot,  
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,  
And died to succor me.

O think ye na but my heart was sair,  
When my love dropt down and spake nae  
mair,  
I laid her down wi' meikle care,  
On fair Kirkconnell lee.

As I went down to the water-side,  
None but my foe to be my guide,  
None but my foe to be my guide,  
On fair Kirkconnell lee —

I lighted down, my sword did draw,  
I hacked him in pieces sma',  
I hacked him in pieces sma',  
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare.  
I 'll weave a garland for thy hair

## Helen of Kirkconnell

Shall bind my heart for evermair,  
Until the day I dee.

O that I were where Helen lies.  
Night and day on me she cries;  
Out of my bed she bids me rise,  
Says "Haste, and come to me."

O Helen fair, O Helen chaste,  
Were I with thee I would be blest,  
Where thou lies low and takes thy rest,  
On fair Kirkconnell lee.

I wish my grave were growing green;  
A winding-sheet drawn o'er my e'en,  
And I in Helen's arms lying  
On fair Kirkconnell lee.

I wish I were where Helen lies.  
Night and day on me she cries,  
And I am weary of the skies,  
For her sake that died for me.

## Jock o' Hazelgreen

*The old ballad, a fragment of which suggested to Scott his Jock of Hazeldean.*

As I went forth to take the air  
    Intill an evening clear,  
I heard a pretty damosel  
    Making a heavy bier:<sup>1</sup>  
    Making a heavy bier, I wort,  
    But and a piteous mean;<sup>2</sup>  
For aye she sighed, and said, “Alas,  
    For Jock o' Hazelgreen!”

The sun was sinking in the west,  
    The stars were shining clear,  
When thro' the thickets o' the wood  
    An auld knicht did appear:  
Says: “Wha has dune you wrang, fair maid,  
    And left you here alone?  
Or wha has kissed your lovely lips,  
    That ye ca' Hazelgreen?”

“Haud<sup>3</sup> your tongue, kind sir,” she said,  
    “And do not banter sae.  
Or, why will ye add affliction

---

1. Lamentation.

2. Moan.

3. Hold.

## Jock o' Hazelgreen

Unto a lover's wae?<sup>4</sup>  
For nae mon has dune me wrang," she said,  
"Nor left me here alane;  
And nane has kissed my lovely lips,  
That I ca' Hazelgreen."

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladye?  
Why weep ye by the tide?  
How blythe and happy micht he be  
Gets you to be his bride!  
And him I'll no bemean;  
But when I tak my words again,—  
Whom ca' ye Hazelgreen?

What like a man was Hazelgreen?  
Will ye show him to me?"  
"He is a comely, proper youth  
I in my days did see;  
His shoulders broad, his armis lang,  
He's comely to be seen:"  
And aye she loot the tears down fa'  
For Jock o' Hazelgreen.

"If ye'll forsake this Hazelgreen,  
And go along wi' me,  
I'll wed ye to my eldest son—  
Make you a lady free."

---

4. Woe.

## Jock o' Hazelgreen

“It’s for to wed your eldest son  
I am a maid o’er mean;  
I’d rather stay at hame,” she says,  
“And dee for Hazelgreen.”

Then he’s ta’en out a siller kaim,<sup>5</sup>  
Kaimed down her yellow hair,  
And lookit in a diamond bricht,  
To see if she were fair.  
“My girl, ye do all maids surpass  
That ever I ha’e seen:  
Cheer up your heart, my lovely lass—  
Forget young Hazelgreen.”

“Young Hazelgreen he is my love,  
And evermair shall be;  
I’ll nae forsake young Hazelgreen  
For a’ the gowd ye’l gie.”  
But aye she sighed, and said, “Alas!”  
And made a piteous mean;  
And aye she loot the tears down fa’  
For Jock o’ Hazelgreen.

But he has ta’en her up behind  
Set her upon his horse;  
And they rode on to Embro’-town,<sup>6</sup>

---

5. Comb.

6. Edinburgh.

## Jock o' Hazelgreen

And lichted<sup>7</sup> at the Cross.  
And he has coft<sup>8</sup> her silken claes  
She looked like any queen :  
“Ye surely now will sigh nae mair  
For Jock o' Hazelgreen?”

“Young Hazelgreen he is my love  
And evermair shall be;  
I'll nae forsake young Hazelgreen  
For a' the gowd ye gie.”

And aye she sighed, and said, “Alas!”  
And made a piteous mean;  
And aye she loot the tears down fa'  
For Jock o' Hazelgreen.

Then he has coft for that ladye  
A fine silk riding-gown;  
Likewise he coft for that ladye  
A steed and set her on;  
Wi' menje feathers in her hat,  
Silk stockings, siller shoon;  
And they ha'e ridden far athort,  
Seeking young Hazelgreen.

And when they came to Hazelyetts  
And lichted down therein;  
Monie were the braw ladyes there,  
Monie ane to be seen.

---

7. Alighted.

8. Bought.

### Jock o' Hazelgreen

When she lichted down amang them a',  
She seemed to be their queen;  
But aye she loot her tears down fa'  
For Jock o' Hazelgreen.

Then forth he came young Hazelgreen,  
To welcome his father free;  
"You're welcome here, my father dear,  
An' a' your companie."  
But when he looked o'er his shoulder,  
A licht laugh then ga'e he;  
Say, "If I getna this ladye,  
It's for her I maun dee.

I must confess this is the maid  
I ance saw in a dream,  
A walking thro' a pleasant shade,  
As she had been a queen.  
And for her sake I vowed a vow  
I ne'er would wed but she;  
Should this fair ladye cruel prove,  
I'll lae me down and dee."

"Now hold your tongue young Hazelgreen;  
Let a' your folly be:  
If ye be sick for that ladye  
She's thrice as sick for thee.  
She's thrice as sick for thee, my son,

### Jock o' Hazelgreen

As bitter doth complain;  
And a' she wants to heal her waes  
Is Jock o' Hazelgreen."

He's ta'en her in his armis twa,  
Led her through bower and ha';  
"Cheer up your heart, my dearest May,  
Ye're ladye o'er them a'.  
The morn sall be our bridal day,  
The nicht our bridal e'en;  
Ye sall nae mair ha'e cause to mean  
For Jock o' Hazelgreen."

### Jock of Hazeldean

*Scott's Version.*

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladie ?  
Why weep ye by the tide ?  
I'll wed ye to my youngest son,  
And ye sall be his bride;  
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,  
Sae comely to be seen."  
But aye she loot the tears down fa'  
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"Now let this wilfu' grief be done,  
And dry that cheek so pale;  
Young Frank is chief of Errington,

## Jock of Hazeldean

And lord of Langley-dale;  
His step is first in peaceful ha',  
    His sword in battle keen."  
But aye she loot her tears down fa'  
    For Jock of Hazeldean.

"A chain of gold ye sall not lack,  
    Nor braid to bind your hair;  
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk,  
    Nor palfrey fresh and fair.  
And you, the foremost of them a',  
    Shall ride the forest queen"  
But aye she loot the tears down fa',  
    For Jock of Hazeldean.

The kirk was decked at morning-tide,  
    The tapers glimmered fair;  
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride,  
    And dame and knight are there.  
They sought her baith by bower and ha';  
    The ladie was not seen!  
She's o'er the Border and awa'  
    Wi' Jock of Hazeldean.

## Robin Hood

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The old ballads when collected and published, formed very interesting volumes and they have proved the inspiration of many of the modern poets who have seized the incident or caught the rhythm of the musical refrain and wrought them into their more finished productions. Sir Walter Scott was much indebted to them and frequently acknowledged his obligation.

One of the most famous characters in these ballads was Robin Hood, an outlaw who was said to live in the greenwood of Nottinghamshire. He was an enemy to all the constituted authorities and robbed the wealthy while giving to the poor. He was always on the side of him who felt the oppressive hand of the ruling class and so became the hero of the common people and was their defender, the popular exponent of those rights of personal liberty and property which it took years of struggle to obtain from the nobles and the crown. Not one half of the tales told of him are true and it may be that no such fiery character ever existed but the songs and legends connected with his name are a permanent fund of entertainment for the race. With fat and jolly Friar Tuck his confessor and chief almoner; Little John the slender giant who acted as his man-at-arms; with

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

Maid Marian, his sweetheart, he held his rude and festive court under the spreading oak trees, or passed through thrilling adventures in which he was always the hero, and outwitted the famous Sheriff of Nottingham or some other of his enemies. The following is one of the best of the many ballads we have in permanent form:

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

There are twelve months in all the year,  
As I hear many say,  
But the merriest month in all the year  
Is the merry month of May.

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,  
*With a link, a down, and a day,*  
And there he met a silly old woman,  
Was weeping on the way.

“What news? What news? thou silly old woman,

What news hast thou for me?”

Said she, “There's my three sons in Nottingham town

To-day condemned to die.”

“O, have they parishes burnt?” he said,

“Or have they ministers slain?

Or have they robbed any virgin?

Or other men's wives have ta'en?”

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

“They have no parishes burnt, good sir,  
Nor yet have ministers slain,  
Nor have they robbed any virgin,  
Nor other men’s wives have ta’en.”

“O, what have they done?” said Robin Hood,  
“I pray thee tell to me.”  
“It’s for slaying of the king’s fallow deer,  
Bearing their bows with thee.”

“Dost thou not mind old woman,” he said,  
“How thou madest me sup and dine?  
By the truth of my body,” quoth Robin Hood,  
“You could not tell it in better time.”

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,  
*With a link, a down, and a day,*  
And there he met with a silly old palmer,  
Was walking along the highway.

“What news? What news? thou silly old  
man,  
What news I do thee pray?”  
Said he, “Three squires in Nottingham town  
Are condemned to die this day.”

“Come change thy apparel with me, old man,  
Come change thy apparel for mine;  
Here is ten shillings in good silver,  
Go drink it in beer or wine.”

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

“O, thine apparel is good,” he said,

“And mine is ragged and torn;

Wherever you go, wherever you ride,

Laugh not an old man to scorn.”

“Come change thy apparel with me, old churl,

Come change thy apparel with mine;

Here is a piece of good broad gold,

Go feast thy brethren with wine.”

Then he put on the old man’s hat,

It stood full high on the crown;

“The first bold bargain that I come at,

It shall make thee come down.”

Then he put on the old man’s cloak,

Was patch’d black, blue and red,

He thought it no shame all the day long,

To wear the bags of bread.

Then he put on the old man’s breeks,

Was patch’d from leg to side:

“By the truth of my body,” bold Robin can  
say,

“This man loved little pride.”

Then he put on the old man’s hose,

Were patch’d from knee to wrist:

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

“By the truth of my body,” said bold Robin Hood,  
“I'd laugh if I had any list.”

Then he put on the old man's shoes,  
Were patch'd both beneath and aboon;  
Then Robin Hood swore a solemn oath,  
“It's good habit that makes a man.”

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,  
*With a link, a down, and a down,*  
And there he met with the proud sheriff,  
Was walking along the town.

“Save you, save you, sheriff!” he said;  
“Now heaven you save and see!  
And what will you give to a silly old man  
To-day will your hangman be?”

“Some suits, some suits,” the sheriff he said,  
“Some suits I'll give to thee;  
Some suits, some suits, and pence thirteen,  
To-day's a hangman's fee.”

Then Robin he turns him round about,  
And jumps from stock to stone:  
“By the truth of my body,” the sheriff he said,  
“That's well jumpt, thou nimble old man.”

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

“I was ne'er a hangman in all my life,  
Nor yet intends to trade;  
But curst be he,” said bold Robin,  
“That first a hangman was made !

“I've a bag for meal, and a bag for malt,  
And a bag for barley and corn;  
And a bag for bread, and a bag for beef,  
And a bag for my little small horn.

“I have a horn in my pocket,  
I got it from Robin Hood,  
And still when I set it to my mouth,  
For thee it blows little good.”

“O, wind thy horn, thou proud fellow !  
Of thee I have no doubt.  
I wish that thou give such a blast,  
Till both thy eyes fall out.”

The first loud blast that he did blow,  
He blew both loud and shrill ;  
A hundred and fifty of Robin Hood's men  
Came riding over the hill.

The next loud blast that he did give,  
He blew both loud and amain,  
And quickly sixty of Robin Hood's men  
Came shining over the plain.

## Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons

“O who are these,” the sheriff, he said,  
“Come tripping over the lee?”  
They’re my attendants,” brave Robin did say;  
“They’ll pay a visit to thee.”

They took the gallows from the slack,  
They set it in the glen,  
They hanged the proud sheriff on that,  
Released their own three men.

## The Elected Knight

The two following ballads are translated from the original by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow : —

## The Elected Knight

*From the Danish.*

[ The following strange and somewhat mystical ballad is from Nyerup and Rahbek's *Danske Viser* of the Middle Ages. It seems to refer to the first preaching of Christianity in the North, and to the institution of Knight-Errantry. The three maidens I suppose to be Faith, Hope, and Charity. The irregularities of the original have been carefully preserved in the translation.]

Sir Oluf he rideth over the plain,  
Full seven miles broad and seven miles wide,  
But never, ah never, can meet with the man  
A tilt with him dare ride.

He saw under the hillside  
A Knight full well equipped ;  
His steed was black, his helm was barred ;  
He was riding at full speed.

He wore upon his spurs  
Twelve little golden birds ;

## The Elected Knight

Anon he spurred his steed with a clang,  
And there sat all the birds and sang.

He wore upon his mail  
Twelve little golden wheels ;  
Anon in eddies the wild wind blew,  
And round and round the wheels they flew.

He wore before his breast  
A lance that was poised in rest ;  
And it was sharper than diamond-stone,  
It made Sir Oluf's heart to groan.

He wore upon his helm  
A wreath of ruddy gold ;  
And that gave him the Maidens Three,  
The youngest was fair to behold.

Sir Oluf questioned the Knight eftsoon  
If he were come from heaven down ;  
"Art thou Christ of heaven," quoth he,  
"So will I yield me unto thee."

"I am not Christ the Great,  
Thou shalt not yield thee yet;  
I am an Unknown Knight,  
Three modest Maidens have me bedight."

"Art thou a Knight elected,  
And have three Maidens thee bedight

## The Elected Knight

So shalt thou ride a tilt this day,  
For all the Maidens' honor!"

The first tilt they together rode,  
They put their steeds to the test;  
The second tilt they together rode,  
They proved their manhood best,

The third tilt they together rode,  
Neither of them would yield;  
The fourth tilt they together rode  
They both fell on the field.

Now lie the lords upon the plain,  
And their blood runs unto death;  
Now sit the Maidens in the high tower,  
The youngest sorrows till death.

## The Luck of Edenhall

*From the German of Uhland*

[The tradition upon which this ballad is founded and the “shards of the Luck of Edenhall,” still exist in England. The goblet is in the possession of Sir Christopher Musgrave, Bart., of Eden Hall, Cumberland, and it is not so entirely shattered as the ballad leaves it.]

Of Edenhall, the youthful lord  
Bids sound the festal trumpet’s call:  
He rises at the banquet board,  
And cries, ‘mid the drunken revelers all,  
“Now bring me the Luck of Edenhall!”

The butler hears the words with pain,  
The house’s oldest seneschal,  
Takes slow from its silken cloth again  
The drinking glass of crystal tall;  
They call it the Luck of Edenhall.

Then said the lord: “This glass to praise,  
Fill with red wine from Portugal!”  
The gray-beard with trembling hand obeys;  
A purple light shines over all,  
It beams from the Luck of Edenhall

## The Luck of Edenhall

Then speaks the lord, and waves it light,  
“ This glass of flashing crystal tall  
Gave to my sires the Fountain-Sprite;  
She wrote in it: *If this glass doth fall*  
*Farewell, then, O Luck of Edenhall !*

“ ‘ Twas right a goblet the Fate should be  
Of the joyous race of Edenhall !  
Deep draughts drink we right willingly;  
And willingly ring, with merry call,  
Kling ! clang ! to the Luck of Edenhall ! ”

First rings it deep, and full, and mild,  
Like to the song of a nightingale;  
Then like the roar of a torrent wild;  
Then mutters at last like the thunder’s fall,  
The glorious Luck of Edenhall.

“ For its keeper takes a race of might,  
The fragile goblet of crystal tall;  
It has lasted longer than is right;  
Kling ! clang ! — with a harder blow than all  
Will I try the Luck of Edenhall ! ”

As the goblet ringing flies apart,  
Suddenly cracks the vaulted hall;  
And through the rift the wild flames start;  
The guests in dust are scattered all,  
With the breaking Luck of Edenhall!

## The Luck of Edenhall

In storms the foe, with fire and sword;  
He in the night had scaled the wall,  
Slain by the sword lies the youthful Lord,  
But holds in his hand the crystal tall,  
The shattered Luck of Edenhall.

On the morrow the butler gropes alone,  
The gray-beard in the desert hall,  
He seeks his Lord's burnt skeleton  
He seeks in the dismal ruin's fall  
The shards of the Luck of Edenhall.

“The stone wall,” saith he, “doth fall aside,  
Down must the stately columns fall;  
Glass is this earth's Luck and Pride;  
In atoms shall fall this earthly ball  
One day like the Luck of Edenhall!”

## Historic Epics

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Other forms of the epic are numerous and a classification can easily be made by the student as he reads. Some few kinds have technical names, as the *allegory*, which in narrative form relates events that have in themselves or in the character concerned a double meaning, the one literal and the other figurative, teaching perhaps a deep moral lesson. Of this class famous examples are *The Vision of Piers Ploughman*, written about 1362, and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The allegory is one of the oldest forms of poetry, when the tendencies were all to personify the vices and virtues of man and to see in the incidents of daily life lessons of faith and character. The *fable* is an allegory, usually brief, that personifies animals and inanimate things and teaches its lesson through their fancied precepts. The *legend* relates the more or less mythical deeds of national heroes or of consecrated beings whom portions of the world hold sacred. The transition from this to the *historic* epic is not abrupt nor can the distinction between the two be always drawn. Three that might be considered as of the last type are appended and the student will find in other parts of this course poems that can be used for comparison.

## Incident of the French Camp

ROBERT BROWNING

You know we French stormed Ratisbon:  
    A mile or so away,  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
    Stood on our storming day.  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how  
    Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
    Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused, “My plans  
    That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
    Waver at yonder wall,—”  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
    A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping: nor bridle drew  
    Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
    And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
    You hardly could suspect —

### Incident of the French Camp

(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

“Well,” cried he, “Emperor, by God’s grace  
We’ve got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal’s in the market place,  
And you’ll be there anon,  
To see your flag-bird flap its vans  
Where I, to heart’s desire,  
Perched him!” The chief’s eye flashed; his  
plans  
Soared up again like fire.

The chief’s eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother eagle’s eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes.  
“You’re wounded!” “Nay,” the soldier’s  
pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
“I’m killed, Sire!” And his chief beside,  
Smiling, the boy fell dead.

## The Wreck of the Hesperus

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

It was the schooner Hesperus,  
That sailed the wintry sea;  
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,  
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy-flax,  
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,  
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,  
That ope in the month of May.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,  
With his pipe in his mouth.  
And watched how the veering flaw did blow  
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old Sailor,  
Had sailed the Spanish Main,  
“I pray thee, put into yonder port,  
For I fear a hurricane.

“Last night, the moon had a golden ring,  
And to-night no moon we see!”  
The skipper he blew a whiff from his pipe,  
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

## The Wreck of the *Wesperus*

Colder and louder blew the wind,  
A gale from the Northeast;  
The snow fell hissing in the brine,  
And the billows frothed like yeast.

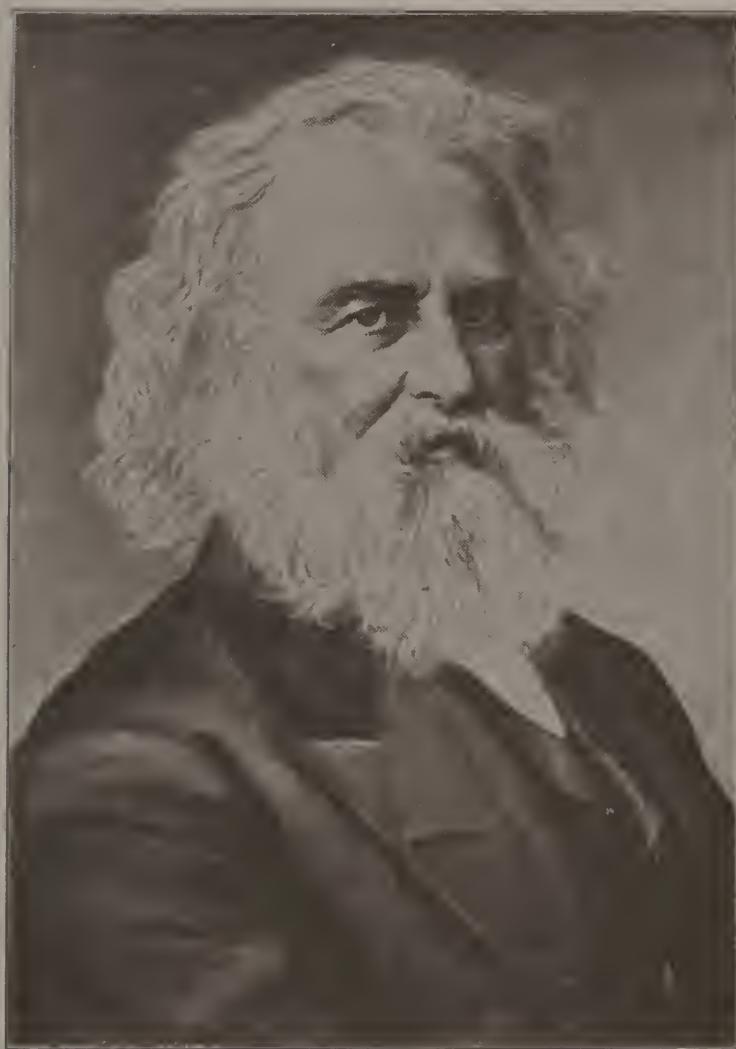
Down came the storm, and smote amain,  
The vessel in its strength;  
She shuddered and paused, like a frighted  
steed,  
Then leaped her cable's length.

“Come hither! come hither! my little daughter,  
And do not tremble so;  
For I can weather the roughest gale,  
That ever wind did blow.”

He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat  
Against the stinging blast;  
He cut a rope from a broken spar,  
And bound her to the mast.

“O father! I hear the church-bells ring,  
O say, what may it be?”  
“'Tis a fog-bell on a rock-bound coast!”  
And he steered for the open sea.

“O father! I hear the sound of guns,  
O say, what may it be?”



*HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW*



## The Wreck of the *Wesperus*

“ Some ship in distress, that can not live  
In such an angry sea! ”

“ O father! I see a gleaming light,  
O say, what may it be? ”

But the father answered never a word,  
A frozen corpse was he.

Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,  
With his face to the skies,  
The lantern gleamed through the gleaming  
snow  
On his fixed and glassy eyes.

Then the maiden clasped her hands and  
prayed  
That saved she might be;  
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the  
wave  
On the Lake of Galilee.

And fast through the midnight dark and  
drear,  
Through the whistling sleet and snow,  
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept  
Towards the reef of Norman’s Woe.

And ever the fitful gusts between  
A sound came from the land;

## The Wreck of the *Hesperus*

It was the sound of the trampling surf,  
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

The breakers were right beneath her bows,  
She drifted a dreary wreck,  
And a whooping billow swept the crew  
Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves  
Looked soft as carded wool,  
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side  
Like the horns of an angry bull.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,  
With the masts went by the board;  
Like a vessel of glass, she strove and sank  
Ho! Ho! the breakers roared!

At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,  
A fisherman stood aghast,  
To see the form of a maiden fair,  
Lashed close to a drifting mast.

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,  
The salt tears in her eyes;  
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea  
weed  
On the billows fall and rise.

## The Revenge

Such was the wreck of the *Hesperus*,  
In the midnight and the snow!  
Christ save us all from a death like this  
On the reef of Norman's Woe!

## The Revenge

*A Ballad of the Fleet*

LORD TENNYSON

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville  
lay,  
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came fly-  
ing from far away:  
“Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted  
fifty-three!”

Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: “’Fore  
God I am no coward;  
But I can not meet them here, for my ships  
are out of gear,  
And the half my men are sick. I must fly,  
but follow quick.  
We are six ships of the line;<sup>1</sup> can we fight  
with fifty-three?”

---

1. Ships powerful enough to fight in the line of battle, carrying sixty guns or more.

NOTE.—Tennyson wrote the first line of this poem and laid it aside in his desk where it remained fifteen years. Then in a single day he dashed off the ringing ballad. Sir Richard Grenville fought for fifteen hours with his one ship, the fifty-three vessels of the Spanish navy. The bravery of the English made a lasting impression upon Spain. Tennyson follows closely the account given by Sir Walter Raleigh.

## The Revenge

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : “ I know  
you are no coward;  
You fly them for a moment to fight with them  
again.  
But I’ve ninety men and more that are lying  
sick ashore,  
I should count myself the coward if I left  
them, my Lord Howard,  
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms  
of Spain.”

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of  
war that day,  
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent sum-  
mer heaven;  
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men  
from the land  
Very carefully and slow,  
Men of Bideford in Devon,  
And we laid them on a ballast down below;  
For we brought them all aboard,  
And they blest him in their pain, that they  
were not left to Spain,  
To the thumbscrew<sup>2</sup> and the stake,<sup>3</sup> for the  
glory of the Lord.

---

2. An instrument of torture by which the thumbs of the victim were crushed.

3. To which victims were fastened to be burned.

## The Revenge

He had only a hundred seamen to work the  
ship and to fight,

And he sailed away from Flores till the  
Spaniard came in sight,

With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the  
weather-bow.

“Shall we fight or shall we fly ?

Good Sir Richard, tell us now,

For to fight is but to die !

There'll be little of us left by the time this  
sun be set.”

And Sir Richard said again : “ We be all good  
English men.

Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children  
of the devil,

For I never turn'd my back upon Don or  
devil yet.”

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we  
roar'd a hurrah, and so

The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart  
of the foe,

With her hundred fighters on deck and her  
ninety sick below;

For half of their fleet to the right and half to  
the left were seen,

And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long  
sea-lane between.

## The Revenge

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from  
their decks and laugh'd,  
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the  
mad little craft  
Running on and on, till delay'd  
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of  
fifteen hundred tons,  
And up-shadowing high above us with her  
yawning tiers of guns,  
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd;

And while now the great San Philip hung  
above us like a cloud  
Whence the thunderbolt will fall  
Long and loud,  
Four galleons drew away  
From the Spanish fleet that day,  
And two upon the larboard and two upon the  
starboard lay,  
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought  
herself and went,  
Having that within her womb that had left  
her ill content;  
And the rest they came aboard us, and they  
fought us hand to hand,

## The Revenge

For a dozen times they came with their pikes  
and musqueteers,  
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog  
that shakes his ears  
When he leaps from the water to the land.

And the sun went down, and the stars came  
out far over the summer sea,  
But never a moment ceased the fight of the  
one and the fifty-three.  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their  
high-built galleons came,  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her  
battle-thunder and flame;  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew  
back with her dead and her shame.  
For some were sunk and many were shat-  
ter'd, and so could fight us no more—  
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in  
the world before ?

For he said, “Fight on ! fight on !”  
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;  
And it chanced that, when half of the short  
summer night was gone,  
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left  
the deck,

## The Revenge

But a bullet struck him that was dressing it  
suddenly dead,  
And himself he was wounded again in the side  
and the head,  
And he said “ Fight on! fight on! ”

And the night went down, and the sun smiled  
out far over the summer sea,  
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay  
round us all in a ring;  
But they dared not touch us again, for they  
fear'd that we still could sting,  
So they watched what the end would be,  
And we had not fought them in vain,  
But in perilous plight were we,  
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,  
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life  
In the crash of the cannonades and the des-  
perate strife;  
And the sick men down in the hold were most  
of them stark and cold,  
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the  
powder was all of it spent;  
And the masts and the rigging were lying over  
the side ;  
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,  
“ We have fought such a fight for a day and  
a night

## The Revenge

As may never be fought again !  
We have won great glory, my men !  
And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore,  
We die — does it matter when ?  
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner — sink her,  
    split her in twain !  
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands  
    of Spain ! ”

And the gunner said, “ Ay, ay,” but the sea-  
men made reply :

“ We have children, we have wives,  
And the Lord hath spared our lives.

We will make the Spaniard promise, if we  
yield, to let us go;  
We shall live to fight again and to strike  
another blow.”

And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded  
to the foe.

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship  
bore him then,  
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir  
    Richard caught at last,  
And they praised him to his face with their  
courtly foreign grace;

## The Revenge

But he rose upon their decks, and he cried: <sup>4</sup>  
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like a  
valiant man and true;

I have only done my duty as a man is bound  
to do:

With a joyful spirit I, Sir Richard Grenville,  
die!"

And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

And they stared at the dead that had been so  
valiant and true,

And had holden the power and glory of Spain  
so cheap

That he dared her with one little ship and his  
English few;

Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught  
they knew,

But they sank his body with honor down into  
the deep,

And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier  
alien crew,

---

4. "Feeling the hower of death to approch, hee spake these words in Spanish and said: Here die I *Richard Greenfield*, with a joyfull and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, yet hath fought for his countrey, Queene, religion, and honor whereby my soul most joyfull departeth out of this bodie, and shall alwaies leave behind it an euerlasting fame of a valiant and true soldier that hath done his dutie as he was bound to do. When hee had finished these or such other like words hee gaue up the ghost, with great and stout courage, and no man could perceiue any true signe of heauiness on him." — *Linschoten*.

## The Revenge

And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd  
for her own;  
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd  
awoke from sleep,  
And the water began to heave and the weather  
to moan,  
And or ever that evening ended a great gale  
blew,

And a wave like the wave that is raised by an  
earthquake grew,  
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and  
their masts and their flags,  
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the  
shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,  
And the little Revenge herself went down by  
the island crags  
To be lost evermore in the main.

What is the prevailing meter in this poem? Do the numerous irregularities, in your opinion, make the poem more or less effective? Can you find reasons for some of these irregularities? On page 234, for instance, do the shortness and the irregular meter of the line *Very carefully and slow* add anything to the thought of the line?

The fight which this ballad describes took place in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Do you find any words or phrases which serve to

## The Revenge

bring to your mind the fact that this was a sixteenth, and not a nineteenth, century battle?

Does Tennyson use many figures of speech in this poem? What impression does the figure in the second line of the poem, *And the pinnace, like a flutter'd bird*, leave in your mind? A striking figure is contained in the lines—

“And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog  
that shakes his ears

When he leaps from the water to the land.”

What is the impression which the author wishes to give in these lines? Do you not feel that the idea of the Englishman's contempt for the Spaniard is expressed more forcibly in this figure than in Sir Richard Grenville's speeches about the Spaniards? At the first reading, did this figure strike you as at all frivolous or inadequate?

Which do you consider the most stirring stanza, or group of lines, in the poem? What is the effect created by the repetition of the words *Ship after ship, the whole night long?* The line *God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?* is practically equivalent to the statement, *There was never a battle like this in the world before.* Does the rhetorical question seem to you more forcible than a positive statement would have been?

Applied Methods  
for  
Teaching Reading and Literature



THE STUDY IN LONGFELLOW'S HOME





## EXERCISE I

### A MUSICAL POEM

#### Robert of Lincoln<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT<sup>2</sup>

1. RHYME. Ask your pupils to make a table of the last words in the lines of every stanza. Arrange the table so that the indentations shall show clearly to the eye the words which rhyme. That you may understand what is meant, we append here a table for the first four stanzas:

I	II	III	IV
weed	drest	wife	she
dame	coat	wings	note
mead	crest	life	he
name	note	sings	throat
link	link	link	link
spink	spink	spink	spink
ours	mine	fear	man
flowers	fine	hear	can
chee	chee	chee	chee

By questioning, draw out the following facts: Each stanza consists of eight lines. The first four lines are descriptive and are spoken by the author.

1. You will find this poem on page 176 of Volume IV. It is also printed in the Baldwin's *School Reading by Grades, Fourth Year*.

2. Consult the Index in Volume X for biography of Bryant, and for other selections from his works.

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The next five lines are the bobolink's song, excepting in the last stanza, when the song is ours. The first two lines and the last line of the song are always the same. The rhymes in the descriptive quatrain alternate. Of the song, the first four lines rhyme in couplets, while the last line is unrhymed. Call attention to the fact that the rhymes are also indicated to the eye at the beginning of the line as well as at the end. The first and third lines in each stanza begin at the left margin, and the second and fourth are indented. This indentation indicates the alternate rhymes. The first two lines of the bobolink's song are much more deeply indented because they are metrically shorter than the other lines ; but they begin at the same point in the line, showing that they rhyme together. The same fact is true of the third and fourth lines of the song. The last line of the stanza, the shortest one in the stanza and the one that rhymes with no other, is indented beyond any other line.

All are perfect rhymes, and in very few instances has Mr. Bryant made any apparent effort to force a rhyme. The word *mead*, in the first stanza, is a poetic word for *meadow*. The word *drest*, in the second stanza, is spelled in an unusual way. Technically speaking, the bobolink has no crest, but Bryant may use the word in the second stanza in a figurative sense with perfect propriety. Perhaps those who know the bobolink's nest would object to the expression *bed of hay* (fifth stanza)

## Robert of Lincoln

as hardly doing justice to the soft bed the little birds make. We may doubt if in prose Mr. Bryant would have said that Robert of Lincoln *bestirs him well*, as we find him saying in the sixth stanza. Perhaps the word *crone* in the last stanza brings out a shade of meaning that is not altogether applicable, and yet it may be exactly what Mr. Bryant wished to say.

2. METER. It is rather a difficult task to analyze the meter of this poem. The first line is dactylic, and by reading the poem we find that this is the prevailing foot; but every stanza and almost every line is varied by the introduction of different feet. In one place or another every foot appears, until one often grows confused if he stops to analyze. Taken as a whole, however, the poem is charming even in its irregularity. Let us consider the first stanza.

1. Mer'rily | swing'ing on | bri'er and | weed'
2. Near' to the | nest' of his | lit'tle | dame',
3. O'ver the | moun'tain-side | or mead',
4. Rob'ert of | Lin'coln is | tel'ling his | name :  
    Bob'-o'-link, bob'-o'-link,
5. Spink', spank', spink' ;
6. Snug' and | safe' in this | nest' of | ours',
7. Hid'den a | mong' the | sum'mer | flow'ers.
8. Chee', chee', chee'.

In the first line there are three dactylic feet followed by an accented syllable. The next line appears to consist of three dactylic feet, but in

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reading, the last word in the line carries emphasis. The third line has two dactylic feet and one iambic foot; the fourth line, three dactylic feet followed by an accented syllable.

The bird's song, in the last five lines, is exceedingly irregular in structure, but it will be found that the structure is practically the same in all the stanzas. Accordingly, we infer that Bryant meant to imitate the broken measures of the bird's song. The word *bob-o'-link* is a dactylic foot. *Spink*, *spank*, *spink* are three accented syllables, as are also the three words *chee*, *chee*, *chee*.

The two intervening lines are not difficult of scansion, but are not easily classified. You will notice that there is in each of these lines but one dactylic foot; the others are trochees, with the exception of the single accented syllable, which terminates the first of the two lines. Trochees and dactyls are very commonly found together. Iambics and anapests are also common in combination.

Enough has been said here to give you an understanding of the meter of *Robert of Lincoln*. It is not worth while to carry it out farther with your classes. If you pay too much attention to the structure, you will destroy appreciation of the underlying rhythm, which here is very strong. Remember that the purpose of metrical analysis is not to label and classify poems as iambic, trochaic, etc., but is to assist merely in an appreciation of the music.

## Robert of Lincoln

3. READING FOR THE MUSIC. When you have brought out the structure sufficiently, read the stanza aloud yourself. In the first four lines lend your voice to the swinging motion of the dactyls ; Robert himself is swinging. When you reach his song, be sprightly and quick in your utterance, and place a strong emphasis on the accented syllables in the first line, *bob'-o'-link*, *bob'-o'-link*. Bryant has chosen the next three words, with their numerous consonants and short, snappy vowels, for the purpose of bringing out the sharp, disconnected notes of the bird's song. The trochees in the next two lines imitate the rolls and trills in the song, which are in great contrast to the emphatic introductory note. To these lines you do not give the broad swinging motion of the descriptive part of the stanza, but the lively, rollicking measures that make the body of the bobolink's song. The words *chee*, *chee*, *chee* are the three final song notes, each prolonged, as is indicated by the double final vowel.

Wherever the meter is very pronounced, many people find it difficult to read aloud without making the accents too prominent, and it seems necessary to repeat here the caution made once or twice before in other words, that reading must not degenerate into scansion. In reading aloud, one finds certain thought-units which very frequently do not correspond with the metrical units of the lines. These thought-units are groups of words

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which are closely related, and whose utterance is given practically with one impulse. If the first stanza were divided into these thought-units, and the emphatic words underscored, the contrast between reading and scansion might become more apparent :

Merrily swinging | on brier and weed |  
Near to the nest | of his little dame, |  
Over the mountain side | or mead, |  
Robert of Lincoln | is telling his name: |  
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link, |  
Spink, | spank, | spink; |  
Snug and safe | in this nest of ours, |  
Hidden among the summer flowers. |  
Chee, chee, chee !

It is a difficult matter to represent oral reading graphically, and you must remember that the underscoring of words in the stanza above does not show the inflections and modulations of the voice with any degree of accuracy, but the vertical lines do indicate the thought-units, and your pupils will notice at once that these units do not correspond with metrical feet. The real music of poetry is made by the combination of the rhythm in the metrical feet, the emphasis and modulation given in expressing the thought, and a third element, which we have not yet mentioned. This last element is found in the vocal power of the words. Some words are in themselves musical,

## Robert of Lincoln

while others are harsh and unpleasant to the ear. The poet realizes this and chooses his words with care. In this first stanza you will notice the force of our remark by comparing the first line with the sixth ; the latter is evidently harsh and unmusical when compared with the others, and it is only tolerable in that by contrast it heightens the tinkling music of the bird's name and the more delicate harmony of the two following lines.

The other stanzas are very similar to the first and need no further explanation, although you must watch for variations from the dactylic feet in the first four lines of each stanza, and for variations in the third and fourth lines of the bird's song. As you read you may find these two lines scanning more easily as iambics and anapests.

4. INTERPRETATION. This lively little poem is so great a favorite with the children, that it seems worth while to offer some suggestions for its interpretation.

a. Words, Phrases, etc. "*Robert of Lincoln.*"

This is a fanciful name which has been derived from the bird's note, which sounds like *Bob o' link*, as though he had abbreviated the words *Robert of Lincoln.*

"*Quaker wife.*" The female bobolink is, as Bryant describes her, very plain in her appearance, quite unlike her brilliant mate. The allusion is to the gray and sober clothing worn by that religious sect, the Quakers.

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*“Off is his holiday garment laid.”* The male bobolink, like most other birds, sheds his gay feathers in the late summer, and the new ones which come out are much soberer in color. After the bobolinks migrate they live in the rice fields of the South, where they are known as rice birds, and are considered a great table delicacy.

*“We sing as he goes.”* There is a very happy idea in this last stanza. Up to this time the bobolink has, in every stanza, sung his own song, but now that he has forgotten it (and few birds do sing in the autumn), we take up the refrain and sing the invitation for him to return.

### b. Character Study :

ROBERT OF LINCOLN	
<i>From Bryant's description.</i>	<i>From Robert's song.</i>
In Summer	In Summer
Gaily dressed.	Fond of home.
Merry.	Proud of his dress.
Gleeful.	Gallant and brave.
Braggart.	Defiant.
Industrious.	Affectionate and complimentary.
In Autumn	Self-commiserating.
Plainly dressed.	
Sober.	
Silent.	
Humdrum.	

Robert is very much of a person as Bryant depicts him. In the first place, as may be seen in the table, the poet gives us some characteristics,

## Robert of Lincoln

and in the second place Robert tells us some things himself by his song and by his actions.

Make a similar outline of the character of Robert's Quaker wife and contrast the two.

c. The Song. Consider the two important lines of the song in each of the first six verses, in order that your pupils may think of these lines together. Bring out your ideas by questions like these :

(1) Stanza 1. What does Robert first sing about? What is his chief thought about this nest of his? How many and what qualities does he see in the location of this nest? Is the fact that it is among *summer flowers* of any great interest to him?

(2) Stanza 2. What is next in importance to the safety of his nest? Was it a new coat that he was wearing? How long had he been wearing it? What trait of character is shown by the line, "Sure there was never a bird so fine."

(3) Stanza 3. Of whom does Robert think now? Who is the *kind creature*? What does he mean by brood? Is he thinking more of himself or of his wife in this stanza? What are the *thieves* and *robbers* she might fear?

(4) Stanza 4. Of whom is he thinking now? Is the trait of character he shows in these two lines in harmony with the trait of character Bryant gives him in the third line of this same stanza? Who are the *cowards* he speaks of? What propriety is there in calling them cowards?

(5) Stanza 5. Of whom is he singing now?

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Does he call her a *nice good wife* because she is doing what she ought to do or because she gives him liberty? Does this show him to be conceited?

(6) Stanza 6. How is this new life likely to be hard for Robert? Is he a *gay young fellow* in respect to his clothes or in respect to his character? Do you think he resents the idea that he has to work, or is he merely sympathizing with himself?

(7) Stanza 7. What is the subject of his song in the seventh verse? How does this compare with the subject of the song in the first stanza? Do you not think that after all, Robert's chief concern is for his nest and its safety? Do you think he is, in spite of his brag and his gay dress, a good husband and father?

(8) Stanza 8. What is the *merry old strain* that Robert piped? Do you think you can join with Bryant in hoping that Robert will come back?

d. Descriptive Lines. The analysis of the descriptive quatrains which introduce each stanza shows the following leading thoughts:

(1) Stanza 1. The merry Robert of Lincoln sings his name from an elevated position near his nest. (The bobolink nests in meadows and is not generally found on mountain sides.)

(2) Stanza 2. The bobolink is gaily dressed in black and white. (*Wedding-coat* alludes to the fact that male birds take on brilliant plumage just before the nesting season.)

## Robert of Lincoln

(3) Stanza 3. The female is a pretty, plain little bird that sits faithfully on her nest.

(4) Stanza 4. She is modest, shy and no singer, while he a braggart and a brilliant vocalist.

(5) Stanza 5. In the nest are six white eggs spotted with purple, which the mother covers.

(6) Stanza 6. The male bobolink works hard feeding the young as soon as they are hatched.

(7) Stanza 7. As he feeds the young, the male bobolink becomes sober and silent, his plumage changes and he ceases to sing.

(8) Stanza 8. In autumn the sedate bobolink migrates to the South with his grown-up brood.

5. CONCLUSION. As we have seen, this musical little poem gives us something of natural history and much of bird character, and exhibits great skill in composition. It is a noteworthy instance of the poet's power in imitating, by the sound of his lines, the song of the bird. In other words, the sound is in harmony with the sense. Moreover, in an indirect way it shows Bryant to be an appreciative observer of nature and a lover of birds, who is more interested in their beauty and their sweet songs than in a scientific inquiry into their habits.

## EXERCISE II

### STUDY OF A FAMILIAR SONG

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#### Introduction

The song which is printed in this exercise is a simple lyric that has for many years been highly popular with the people of the United States. Almost every one knows it and has sung it many times. You hear it whistled in the streets and hummed in crowded offices. It is printed in many of the school readers, and any allusion to it brings out a smile of pleasant recollection.

In our study we shall try to find some of the reasons for its popularity, and to understand why accomplished students of literature sometimes criticise it. In presenting it to your classes, however, it is not wise to dwell to a great extent upon its faults. It is sincere and will appeal to the sensibilities of the children, who will be slow to see its faults if they learn to appreciate its beauty and love its rich melody.

It will always have more meaning for older people than for children, for it is altogether retrospective. There are things in the poem which will make it of lessening public interest as time goes on, but the sentiment will always appeal to humanity, even though individuals do not understand all its allusions to old time scenes.

THE STAIRWAY IN LONGFELLOW'S HOME





## The Old Oaken Bucket

### The Old Oaken Bucket

SAMUEL WOODWORTH<sup>1</sup>

I. How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,  
When fond recollection presents them to view !  
The orchard, the meadow, the deep, tangled wildwood,  
And every loved spot that my infancy knew.  
The wide-spreading pond, and the mill that stood by it ;  
The bridge and the rock where the cataract fell ;  
The cot of my father, the dairy house nigh it,  
And e'en the rude bucket which hung in the well—  
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,  
The moss-covered bucket which hung in the well.

---

1. Samuel Woodworth was born at Scituate, Mass., in 1785. His death occurred in 1842. He was the editor of several publications and wrote a great many short poems, some operettas and a romantic tale. All of these, however, are practically forgotten, and he is remembered only because of the little song we print here.

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2. That moss-covered bucket I hail as a treasure ;  
For often at noon, when returned from the field,  
I found it the source of an exquisite pleasure,  
The purest and sweetest that nature can yield.  
How ardent I seized it, with hands that were glowing,  
And quick to the white-pebbled bottom it fell ;  
Then soon with the emblem of truth overflowing,  
And dripping with coolness it rose from the well—  
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,  
The moss-covered bucket arose from the well.

3. How sweet from the green mossy brim to receive it.  
As poised on the curb, it inclined to my lips !  
Not a full blushing goblet could tempt me to leave it,  
Though filled with the nectar that Jupiter sips.

## The Old Oaken Bucket

And now, far removed from the loved situation,

The tear of regret will oftentimes swell,  
As fancy returns to my father's plantation,  
And sighs for the bucket which hangs in  
the well—

The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,

The moss-covered bucket which hangs in  
the well.

---

## Outline

1. **MASTERY OF THOUGHT.** One of the reasons for the popularity of this lyric may be found in the simplicity of the style. There are few words that are difficult, few allusions that are troublesome, and the structure of the sentences is not involved. Children of the city will need more assistance than those who live in the country.

a. **Stanza 1.** "*Fond recollection.*" This means that he recalls the things of which he was fond in his childhood.

"*Infancy.*" We must give to this word a wider meaning than is usually applied to it. In the eye of the law, a person is an infant until he is twenty-one years of age.

"*Wide-spreading pond.*" We may infer from *wide-spreading* that the pond was an artificial one

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caused by the dam for the mill, and that the waters had been spread over much more space than that which they naturally covered.

“*Cataract.*” In all probability, *cataract* is a stronger word than is required here, but it is euphonious.

“*Cot.*” This is a poetic form of the word *cottage*.

“*Dairy house.*” The word *house* is unnecessary. It was inserted to make the meter right.

“*Nigh.*” A poetical word for *near*.

“*E'en.*” A poetical word for *even*.

b. Stanza 2. “*Ardent.*” This adjective is used by poetic license for the adverb *ardently*.

“*Glowing.*” It is not usual to speak of *glowing hands*. We often speak of a *glowing countenance*. The necessities of rhyme and meter have brought the word in here.

“*White-pebbled bottom.*” This must have been a shallow well if the bottom was visible. It may have been sunk into a natural spring, as the bottom was white-pebbled; or, the pebbles may have been put into the well to make it look clean and attractive.

“*Emblem of truth.*” This is an unusual expression. Water is usually spoken of as the emblem of purity, though we sometimes hear of truth *hiding at the bottom of a well*.

c. Stanza 3. “*Poised on the curb.*” The curb was the square wooden box that was built about

## The Old Oaken Bucket

the old-fashioned well, to keep dirt from it. Sometimes a roof was built over the curb, and sometimes it was left open. The children would draw a bucket of water, set it on the curb and tip the bucket forward so they could drink from its edge.

“*Full blushing goblet.*” A *blushing goblet* is a figurative expression for a glass of wine or some other colored liquor.

“*Nectar.*” Nectar was the drink of the gods, as told in the old Greek mythology, and Jupiter was chief of the Greek gods.

“*Situation.*” Here again the necessities of rhyme have caused the use of a word which in prose would not be favored. *Location* is better than *situation*, but *location* would destroy the meter.

“*Swell.*” Would not the word *well* be better here? Is it possible that it was so written originally? Tears *well* from the eyes.

“*Plantation.*” This word is probably not to be taken literally, but is the poetic substitute for *farm*.

2. STRUCTURE. a. Meter. The meter of this poem is almost perfectly regular. Each stanza consists of ten lines. All the odd-numbered lines consist of one iambus, three anapests and an unaccented syllable. All the even-numbered lines consist of one iambus and three anapests. We may speak of the poem as anapestic tetrameter.

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b. Rhyme. The rhyme scheme is as simple as the metrical arrangement. The lines rhyme in alternate couplets ; in the odd-numbered lines the rhyme is double ; in the even-numbered lines it is single. You will notice that the double rhymes are affected by the addition to the line of an unaccented syllable, which makes the sole variation of anapestic measures at the end of the lines.

c. The Refrain. The last two lines of each stanza are the same and do not rhyme with each other. Metrically they are exactly like the other lines, the first one terminating in an unaccented syllable and the second with a regular anapest. This refrain forms the chorus of the song.

The rhyme scheme, metrical arrangement and refrain all contribute in making the rhythm very marked, and accordingly this poem is difficult to read but easy to sing. The movement of any such poem readily seizes the imagination, and its monotony makes it easy of imitation. One is not surprised, then, to find that many parodies have been written on *The Old Oaken Bucket*.

3. PICTORIAL EFFECTS. After the exclamation which constitutes the first two lines, the remaining part of that stanza is wholly pictorial, and it is only by seeing the pictures vividly that one can fully appreciate the sentiment of the remainder of the poem. Develop the pictures in the minds of the pupils by a series of questions and comments after this manner :

## The Old Oaken Bucket

Mr. Woodworth must have passed his boyhood in the country, and he tells us enough in this first stanza to enable us to make a very pleasing picture of his home. What are the elements in the picture? (An orchard, a meadow, a wood, a pond, a mill, a bridge, a cataract, a rock, a dairy house, a well and a bucket.) Of course we know there must have been other things about the house, and we may supply them as we like, but these things are mentioned and we must include them.

Let us give the picture some definite form. We can do this best by imagining that we stand on a little hill and look down upon the scene. At our right is the cottage. What is its shape? Of what is it made? How many stories high is it? Of what is the roof made? In which direction does it face? Is it an old cottage or a new one? Are there any vines growing over it, or shrubs near it, or flowers?

Near the house and a little beyond it is the well. How high is the curb? Of what is the curb made? Is there a roof on the well? How is the bucket put down into the well, and how is the water drawn up? (Some old-fashioned wells were operated by a sweep, that is, by a long pole which was supported near its center on an upright post. One end of the pole was weighted so that it would more than over-balance the empty bucket, which hung by a rope from the other end, over the well. When anyone wanted water, he would pull down on

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the rope and thereby lift the weight at the other end of the pole. After filling the bucket, he would pull up on the rope, and the weight at the end of the pole would assist him. Such an arrangement could be used only in a shallow well. Another plan was to use a long pole with a hook upon the end of it, by which the bucket was let down into the well and when full, lifted up, hand over hand. A third form was used where the well was deeper. From the center of the roof, or cross-piece above the well, was suspended a grooved wheel, over which passed a rope. At each end of the rope a bucket was suspended. The wheel turned on a swivel, so that the rope could be swung around, and the full bucket was raised by pulling down the empty one.) Which kind of a well do you suppose this was? Is there any mention made of two buckets? Have we a right to assume there was but one bucket? (If so, it must have been one of the first two kinds mentioned.) What is said about the bucket? (It hung in the well.) Would it hang in the well if it were put down and lifted out at the end of a long stick? May we assume that it was a well with an old-fashioned sweep, such a one as Whittier tells us about in his *Snow-Bound*?

Beyond the house, a little more toward the middle of our picture, stood the dairy. Do you suppose the dairy was near the stream? (Frequently the old-fashioned dairy house was built

## The Old Oaken Bucket

over a stream and the milk pans were set in the running water to keep the milk cool. Sometimes the dairy house stood near the stream, and water was brought through wooden pipes from farther up-stream and made to flow through the house, around the milk pans and back into the stream.)

Shall we put a stable into our picture? Are there haystacks and chicken coops? May we add living animals to our picture—horses, cattle, sheep, barnyard fowls? Are there pigeons flying around?

Possibly the road to the stables leads through the center of our picture, and passes the house. Across the road we can see the orchard, and beyond it the meadow, and still beyond that, outside the fence which protects the cultivated fields, lies the deep, tangled wildwood.

If our picture is growing too crowded, we may imagine that we shall have to walk a little farther down the stream to find the old stone bridge, across which the road runs, and near which, on the bank of the river, stands the mill with its big overshot wheel at the end, turning noisily around as the water falls upon it. This water comes through a raceway from the dam above, and if we walk along the race to the dam, we look out upon the wide-spreading pond back of the house. Probably the farm lies in a valley, and the hills, which border one side, draw down close to the stream, where a big rock makes the cataract from the surplus water of the pond.

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Of course these pictures offer opportunities for infinite variation, and no matter what you say, each pupil will form for himself a picture different from that of any other child. The object of our instruction is to make him see a vivid picture and enjoy seeing it. Let the pupils put in as many details as they like, but do not drive them to the point of weariness in it. You may have to supply the old-fashioned elements in the picture, but they will probably give you many details which you have not had in mind.

Now when the picture is complete, we must come back again to the central fact in the picture. The house, the mill, the pond and the orchard are subordinate elements after all, for it is with the bucket, the last mentioned thing, that the poem is concerned. What is the bucket like? (It is made of thick oaken staves, bound with strong hoops of iron, and from long use the staves at the top and below, where they project beyond the bottom, are battered and broken from frequent collision with the white pebbles. Green moss covers all protected parts of the bucket, even to the iron bail.)

4. SENTIMENT. The poet found his inspiration for this lyric in one of the commonest and most necessary things about his early home, and as the poem deals with these common and simple things, it strongly appeals to us. As children, we may not all have had the privilege of drawing a bucket

## The Old Oaken Bucket

of cold water from the depths of a well and drinking from its battered margin, but we have done other things equally simple that now come back to us as delightful reminiscences, after years of experience in the world. Accordingly, we are willing to accept this old oaken bucket as a symbol of the things that it pleases us most to remember in our childhood. We read the poem and we sing the song as though we had drunk from the same bucket, but we think of the times we returned from school to water the flowers in our crowded little gardens in the city, or to play about the paved areas with friends who have long since passed away. Whether we lived in the country or in the city, there were some things that gave us keen enjoyment, some things that equaled the exquisite pleasure Woodworth felt when he returned from the field at noon and ardently seized the bucket with glowing hands.

5. THE TUNE. The music to which this lyric is sung is as simple as the poem itself and partakes of the same monotonous nature. As music, it is exceedingly elementary, the musical phrases are simple, and in the first line the first phrase is repeated. The melody runs to the end of the second line and repeats itself exactly in the third and fourth lines. The fifth and sixth lines are sung to a different melody, which the seventh and eighth repeat. The music of the refrain is that of the first and second lines.

## EXERCISE III

### A POPULAR LYRIC

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#### *The Mariner's Dream*<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM DIMOND

1. INTRODUCTION. Assuming that your class has had some instruction in the methods we have advocated in the preceding volume; that they know how they should proceed to get the thought of a selection; that they know something about the characteristics of poetry, its structure and its beauty, this poem might be assigned as a lesson, and after the pupils have made their preparation, the recitation might be conducted as is indicated in the remainder of this exercise. You may assume that the teacher is talking, and that the statements included in parentheses are answers from the pupil or are what the pupils should be expected to know. In many cases no intimation of the answer is given, but in such instances the substance and form of the answer are evident.

What is the title of this poem? What is a mariner?

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1. This lyric, which has been printed time and again in the school readers, has enjoyed a wide popularity among children and young people in spite of its crudities of structure and thought. The sentiment and the rhythm have carried it.

## The Mariner's Dream

2. STANZA 1. Before we try to read this poem with expression, we must understand it thoroughly. *A*, you may read the first stanza.

In slumbers of midnight the sailor boy lay ;  
His hammock swung loose at the sport of  
the wind ;  
But, watchworn and weary, his cares flew away,  
And visions of happiness danced o'er his  
mind.

Are *slumbers of midnight* different from any other kind of slumbers? What is the literal meaning? (The boy was sleeping soundly.) How old a boy was he? (Anywhere from fourteen to twenty.) What is a hammock? Was the hammock swung on deck? (If not, how could it have *swung loose at the sport of the wind*?) Why was the boy weary? (He was worn out keeping watch.) What figure is found in *his cares flew away*? (Personification.) Does the same figure appear again in the stanza? (Yes, *visions . . . danced*.) What is the rhyme scheme? (Alternate couplets.) Which rhyme is imperfect? (*Wind* does not rhyme with *mind*. Sometimes readers pronounce the first word *wind*. In singing, the word is usually pronounced *wind* when made to rhyme with a word containing the long *i*. It is not a good practice in reading.) What is the first metrical foot? (*In slum-*) The second? (*bers of mid-*) The third? (*night the sail-*) The fourth? (*or boy lay*.) What is the name

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of the first foot? (Iambus.) Of the next three? (Anapest.) How many feet are there in the line? What is the meter, then? (Anapestic tetrameter.) Are the other lines of the stanza the same? (Exactly.) Give the substance of the stanza in your own words. [Allow great freedom in this paraphrase, but be sure that the pupil expresses the exact meaning. If his version is not what it should be, help him to make a better one.]

3. STANZA 2. *B* may read the second stanza.  
He dreamed of his home, of his dear native  
bowers,

And pleasures that waited on life's merry  
morn ;

While Memory stood sideways, half covered  
with flowers,

And restored every rose, but secreted its  
thorn.

What are *bowers*? Do we use the word commonly? Do you like the word in this connection? Why do you suppose the poet used it? (To rhyme with *flowers*. It is not a first-rate word.) Why does the word *Memory* begin with a capital letter? What is the force of *stood sideways*? [You may be able to explain this by saying that as the boy remembered only a part of his early life, Memory did not present her full face, she *stood sideways*.] Expressed in a few words, what is the meaning of the last two lines? (The

## The Mariner's Dream

boy remembered, in his dream, only the pleasant happenings in his childhood.)

4. STANZA 3. *C*, you may read the third stanza.  
Then Fancy her magical pinions spread wide,  
And bade the young dreamer in ecstasy rise :  
Now far, far behind him the green waters glide,  
And the cot of his forefathers blesses his  
eyes.

What is personified in this stanza? (Fancy.) How does Fancy appear? (As an angel, with wings.) Was there anything to show in the second stanza what sort of a person Memory was? Was Memory a man or a woman? How do we know that Fancy is a woman? Why are her pinions called *magical*? What is meant by rising in *ecstasy*? What is meant by the *green waters gliding behind him*? Was the boy's ship on the ocean or on some smaller body of water, a river, for instance? (*Green waters, far, far behind* would show that he was out on the ocean.) Did the boy go from a new country or from a country long settled? (The latter; the cottage in which he was born was one that his forefathers had occupied.)

5. STANZA 4. Read the fourth stanza, *D*.  
The jessamine clammers in flower o'er the  
thatch,  
And the swallow chirps sweet from her nest  
in the wall ;

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All trembling with transport, he raises the latch,  
And the voices of loved ones reply to his call.

Can you tell what season of the year it was when the boy, in his dream, reached his home? (The jessamine was in flower.) Would jessamine grow in the northern parts of the British Isles? What was the *thatch*? (The roof of his home, which was made of straw bound together.) Do you suppose this boy in his childhood lived in the United States? (No, such roofs are not found here.) Where might he have lived? Very probably in England, for thatched roofs are there common.) Do swallows build their nests in walls here? Do you think the house was built of wood or of stone? Are stone houses with thatched roofs common in England and Ireland? (Yes, very common.) What reason have you for thinking the boy lived in a humble home? (It was a cottage, had a thatched roof, and a latch.)

6. STANZA 5. *E*, you may read the next stanza.

A father bends o'er him with looks of delight ;  
His cheek is impearled with a mother's warm tear ;  
And the lips of the boy in a love kiss unite  
With the lips of the maid whom his bosom holds dear.

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When he entered the house, who met him? Do you think now he was a young boy or a man grown? (At least we know he was not as tall as his father, for his father bent over him.) How did the mother greet him? (She kissed him, we know, for she left a pearly tear on his cheek.) Is the person spoken of in the next two lines the boy's sister? Were they expecting him home, that this third person should be there waiting for him?

7. STANZA 6. You may read the next stanza.

The heart of the sleeper beats high in his breast;

Joy quickens his pulses—all hardships seem o'er,

And a murmur of happiness steals through his rest:

“O God! thou hast blest me; I ask for no mote.”

What is the literal meaning of *beats high*? Has he grown more excited in his dream? What were the hardships that seemed to have passed? This stanza seems to be somewhat broken up, and it includes a quotation. Is the meter changed any? (Not at all.) Have the rhymes been perfect in the stanzas since the first? (Yes.)

8. STANZA 7. You may read the next stanza.

Ah! what is that flame which now bursts on his eye?

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Ah ! what is that sound which now larums  
his ear ?

'Tis the lightning's red gleam, painting death  
in the sky !

'Tis the crashing of thunders, the groan of  
the sphere !

Is this part of the boy's dream ? What is happening ? (The ship has taken fire.) What caused the fire on the ship ? What is the second word from the end of the second line ? Is it a common word ? (No, the dictionary does not authorize its use as a verb. It is a poetic word.) What *sphere* is meant ? What is the *groan of the sphere* ? Do you think the ship has really been struck by lightning, or has fire broken out, and are the expressions in the stanza used figuratively to show the fright and alarm caused by fire on shipboard ? (There is no greater terror confronting the mariner than fire in his ship.)

### 9. STANZA 8. The next stanza.

He springs from his hammock—he flies to the  
deck !

Amazement confronts him with images dire ;  
Wild winds and mad waves drive the vessel a  
wreck ;

The masts fly in splinters ; the shrouds are  
on fire !

When awakened, what did the boy do first ?

## The Mariner's Dream

What did he do next? Did we decide that his hammock was swung on the deck? In the light of this stanza, could it have been? How, then, do you account for the expression in the first stanza—*swung loose at the sport of the wind*? Was he below deck, in his regular quarters, and was there an open port hole? Is there more than one deck on the ship? Might his hammock have been swung somewhere in the open air but not over the deck? What are *images dire*? Is *amazement* personified here? What is the meaning of this second line? Do you think now that the ship had been struck by lightning? Was there a storm progressing? What made the masts fly in splinters?

10. STANZA 9. *F* may read this stanza.

Like mountains the billows tremendously swell;  
In vain the lost wretch calls on Mercy to  
    save;  
Unseen hands of spirits are ringing his knell,  
    And the death angel flaps his broad wing  
        o'er the wave!

With what figure of speech does this stanza begin? (Simile, in *like mountains*.) Is it common to say that waves are *mountain high*? How high are they really? (They appear twice their actual height, for the ship may be sunk in the hollow of one wave and those on shipboard see the crest of the next towering over it.) Who is the *lost wretch*? What is a *knell*? Where is his knell ringing?

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What is meant by the *death angel* flapping his *broad wing o'er the wave*? How many figures of speech are there in this stanza? In what line is the meter of this stanza a little difficult? (In the third. The difficulty is in the word *unseen*.)

### 11. STANZA 10. The next stanza.

O sailor boy, woe to thy dream of delight!  
In darkness dissolves the gay frost work of  
bliss.

Where now is the picture that Fancy touched  
bright—

Thy parents' fond pressure, and Love's  
honeyed kiss?

What really fine line is there in this stanza? (The second.) Is the word *darkness* appropriate? (Yes. When the frost dissolves from the window, it is left dark.) What is the *frost work of bliss* that has dissolved? (The boy's dream.) What is the *darkness* into which it has dissolved? (Death.)

### 12. STANZA 11. Read the next stanza.

O sailor boy! sailor boy! never again  
Shall home, love, or kindred thy wishes  
repay;  
Unblessed and unhonored, down deep in the  
main  
Full many a fathom, thy frame shall decay.

## The Mariner's Dream

Do you like the word *repay* at the end of the second line? Why is it used there? If it were not for keeping the rhyme, what word would be better? What is the force of *unhonored*? What is the *main*? What is a *fathom*? What is the meaning of *full many a*? Would you use the expression *full many a fathom* if you were speaking? Do you like to use the word *frame*? Does this stanza seem like cheap sentiment?

### 13. STANZA 12. Read the last stanza.

Days, months, years, and ages shall circle away,

And still the vast waters above thee shall roll;

Earth loses thy pattern for ever and aye:—

O sailor boy! sailor boy! peace to thy soul!

What is the force of the word *circle* in the first line? (Days repeat themselves, months grow into years and into ages, and repeat themselves in unending circles.) Would you use *vast waters* in ordinary speech?

14. FINAL READING. It is a hard thing to be away from home and friends; to be obliged to work hard all day, scrubbing the decks and doing other menial tasks. When night comes, and the boy crawls into the swinging hammock, nothing is more natural than that his thoughts should go back to home and the loved ones there, and the certainty that he would meet with a most affec-

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tionate reception. His father would greet him proudly and his mother with affectionate delight. What could be more awful than to know of a boy, wrapped in such charming slumber, brought at once face to face with death, and death in so terrible a form as comes from a burning ship at sea? We should be hard-hearted indeed if our souls were not stirred to sympathy with him. Now, as we read, let us not be ashamed to show our feelings, as we pass from stanza to stanza.

This time as we read the poem, we want no interruptions, because we wish to go through the boy's experiences just as completely as we can in our imagination. Now, there are just six stanzas that tell about the boy's dream, and six that tell about the terrible awakening. We will arrange it so the girls in the class will read the dream, and the boys the storm and the wreck. This will mean that some of us will have to read more than one stanza, and others can not read at all. After the poem has been read in this way, if the results have not been good, select your two best readers and ask one to read the dream through to the awakening. Make your choice according to the temperaments of your pupils. If you want to divide the poem differently, there are good points of division at the end of the fourth stanza, the sixth and the ninth. If you are a good reader yourself, read the poem through in a final appeal to the emotions of your pupils.

## Miscellany





*JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL*



## James Russell Lowell

*1819-1891*

Lowell was one of the few authors to achieve first rank in several departments. His poetry is most exquisite in sentiment, often keen and witty, and always abounding in beautiful expressions; as a critic he was at times caustic and severe, but he showed so clear a grasp of his subject and spoke in such a fearless way with evidence of such profound scholarship that his writings exerted great influence. He was a diplomat who could win such credit at the court of Spain that he was transferred to England, and as Minister to the Court of St. James he handled our foreign relations with such consummate skill and was so popular with the British in a social way that his departure for America caused universal regret.

He was the son of a clergyman and was educated at Harvard, practiced law in Boston, and had his life-long home in the house his father had owned, Elmwood, in Cambridge. Keenly intellectual by nature, he drew his associates from the most cultivated people and became a man of scholarly tastes and refined manners. The home in which he lived was situated in the midst of groves several acres in extent where the great variety of trees, the luxuriant shrubbery and

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flowering plants, gave refuge to many varieties of birds and other forms of animal life. For these he had the warmest love, and birds and flowers appear again and again in all his writings. No one has seemed to have a keener insight into nature or more skill in putting into attractive form the results of his observations. He sees everything with a poet's eye and the simplest facts are clothed in choicest phrase.

Sorrow came to him early in his married life and his feelings are poured forth in those beautiful lyrics *She Came and Went*, *The First Snow Fall* and the *Changeling*. Then his wife died and again his grief resulted in the production of two poems of matchless beauty, *After the Burial* and *The Dead House*. The same night that Lowell's wife died a child was born to Longfellow, who touchingly alluded to the striking contrast in *The Two Angels*.

Lowell and Longfellow, Emerson and Holmes, all sons of clergymen, with Whittier, Bryant, and Taylor, have by their spotless characters, high motives and the purity of their writings given a tone to American literature of their century that has been surpassed by no other epoch here or abroad. Home and country, ties of kindred and of friendship, nature and her inspiration, God and his love have been their themes, and the race is the nobler for their having lived. The brilliancy of their work has been in no way dimmed by

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their adherence to right and their blameless lives. They have demonstrated that the wretched lives of other men of genius have been a blemish upon the pages of history and that the success of the others has been in spite of their errors and not because of them.

Lowell's writings are peculiarly keen and witty, and one of the unique productions of the age is his *Biglow Papers* in which through the medium of the Yankee dialect, in poetry and prose, he speaks his mind on the slavery question and the two wars in which it embroiled us. Cutting sarcasm and keen ridicule characterize many of the papers while often there is an outburst of sentiment as touching as it is unexpected. These stanzas in which he laments the death of his nephews, lost in the Rebellion, are fine examples:

“Rat-tat-tat-tattle thru the street  
I hear the drummers makin' riot,  
An' I set thinkin' o' the feet  
Thet follored once an' now are quiet,—  
White feet ez snowdrops innercent,  
That never knowed the paths o' Satan,  
Whose comin' step ther' s ears that won't,  
No, not lifelong, leave off awaitin'.

Why, hain't I held 'em on my knee?  
Didn't I love to see 'em growin',

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Three likely lads ez wal could be,  
Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin'?  
I set an' look into the blaze  
Whose natur', jes' like theirn, keeps  
climbin',  
Ez long, 'z it lives, in shinin' ways,  
An' half despise myself for rhymin'.

Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth  
On War's red techstone rang true metal,  
Who ventured life an' love an' youth  
For the gret prize o' death in battle?  
To him who, deadly hurt, agen  
Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,  
Tippin' with fire the bolt of men  
Thet rived the Rebel line asunder?

'Tain't right to hev the young go fust,  
All throbbin' full o' gifts an' graces,  
Leavin life's paupers dry ez dust  
To try an' mak b'lieve fill their places:  
Nothin' but tells us wut we miss,  
Ther' 's gaps our lives can't never fay in,  
An' *thet* world seems so fur from this  
Lef' for us loafers to grow gray in!"

*The Vision of Sir Launfal* is a story of the times  
of King Arthur, but it is an example of the litera-  
ture that lives, always appropriate, confined to no

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time or place. Incorporated in it are a summer and a winter scene as beautiful as any the language affords. His prose writings are voluminous and varied, and their wit and beauty are charming to everyone who has the scholarship to appreciate their wealth of classical allusion and the breadth and depth of their thought.

He is buried with his family in the beautiful Mt. Auburn cemetery not far from the grave of Longfellow.

“He was essentially a fighter; he could always begin the attack, and always in criticism as in talk, sound the charge and open the fire. The old Puritan conscience was deep in him, with its strong simple vision, even in æsthetic things, of evil and of good, of wrong and of right, and his magnificent wit was all at its special service. He armed it, for vindication and persuasion, with all the amenities, the ‘humanities’—with weapons as sharp as it has ever carried.”

## Alfred Tennyson

1809-1892

The life of Tennyson is the quiet uneventful life of the poet. Warm-hearted, shy and sensitive from boyhood and absorbed in his studies, he was not apt to meet with stirring adventures nor to seek excitement in travel. Life in his father's home was pleasant and helpful, for the family was large and his two older brothers were both inclined to poetry. The rectory was situated in a delightful region and Alfred's senses were early attuned to the beautiful in nature.

His education progressed at the hands of his father, the rector, and in the village school, and at eighteen he and his brother published a small volume of poems. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he won in his second year a gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*, and surrounded himself with a group of brilliant friends whose talents made them conspicuous in university life.

Here chief among his friends was the lovable genius, Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian. Everyone bears tribute to the perfect character and wonderful genius of this young man, to whom Tennyson was so ardently attached. In 1833, just after Hallam had graduated from Cambridge, he died while abroad with his father, and

## Alfred Tennyson

the mourning among his friends was deep and sincere. This was the one startling and revolutionary event in the life of Tennyson. Prior to that time he had written many poems of decided promise and a few of distinguished merit in spite of the contemptuous criticisms of the magazines. But the death of his friend cast a pall over his spirit, so dense that the naturally sad and melancholy traits of his character threatened to predominate. For ten years he brooded over his loss and gave no book to the public. But his genius was only in temporary eclipse and when he again was ready to take up his pen he was in the full maturity of his powers. The first book published after his affliction was printed in 1842 and fully established his reputation. His work at once took first rank and from that time forward his success was continuous, though as late as 1845 he had received little pecuniary compensation and was glad to accept a pension from the crown.

About this time, Carlyle writing to Emerson said—"A true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother.—A man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom. One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically

## Alfred Tennyson

loose, free and easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic, — fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet in these last decades such company over a pipe. We shall see what he will grow to."

This year 1850 was a notable one in Tennyson's life. Wordsworth died and Tennyson was chosen poet laureate to succeed him. He married a woman who became a devoted wife and made for him a happy home; and he published his matchless elegy *In Memoriam*. Though elsewhere the poem is treated at greater length, here are the comments of Gladstone and of Stedman. The former says: "The richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed," and the latter, "the great threnody of our language, by virtue of its unique conception and power."

*Idylls of the King* were published in 1859 and *Enoch Arden* in 1864. He published three dramas which though very strong and beautiful poems were not popular when presented on the stage.

In 1884 he was raised to the peerage by the Queen. He lived at his beautiful home at Farringford in the Isle of Wight, or at Aldworth, another house he owned in Sussex, where he died in October, 1892. He was interred in Westminster Abbey.

"Next to Robert Browning, and in front of the

## Alfred Tennyson

Chaucer monument, my father was laid: and for weeks after the funeral multitudes passed by the grave in never-ending procession."

"The death of Tennyson was worthy of his life, and yet with a conscious stateliness which was all his own; and these two, simplicity and stateliness, were also vital in the texture of his poetry." — *Stopford Brooke*.

"He was in the main orthodox. He had sympathy with doubt for he had felt it himself, and he had given honorable expression to his belief in the value, as faith, of 'honest doubt.' But he had never felt it in that imperious form in which it demands a solution satisfactory to the reason. After some degree of hesitation and difficulty he was able to put it aside. The something amiss 'will be unriddled by and by.'" — *Hugh Walker*.

His writings are voluminous and worthy of study in their entirety. So much is said of him and his work in other parts of the course that it is unnecessary to dwell longer on him here.

## John Milton

1608-1674

“John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.”

— *T. B. Macaulay.*

In personal appearance Milton was attractive, being of medium size and well proportioned, with features perfectly regular and symmetrical and surmounted in early life by light brown hair. He was refined and delicate in manner, but withal skillful and courageous when the demand was made upon him; though he was known by his college mates as the “Lady of Christ’s College” this did not imply any undue effeminacy.

Born the son of a notary in comfortable circumstances, Milton was carefully educated and showed early in life a studious and responsive disposition. Long before the age at which life begins to mean much to the ordinary boy, John Milton had consecrated himself to a work which though delayed in its accomplishment until he was an old man was none the less successfully finished. At college he manifested some of the traits of character that made him subsequently change opinions and even religion, and at least twice he was under



MILTON DICTATING *SAMSON AGONISTES*



## John Milton

sentence of suspension by the college faculties for his obstinate adherence to his own opinions.

It was a stormy age into which he was thrown and one in which took place the greatest political changes known in the history of England. He saw Charles I on the throne, knew the condition of the court and the church in that degenerate time; he was a sympathetic worker in the Revolution and during Cromwell's Protectorate; and he lived for fourteen years a quiet spectator of the intrigues and follies of the dissolute court of Charles II. A royalist in the beginning, he wrote with a prejudice in favor of the king and his adherents, and it was not until he became satisfied of the clergy's degeneracy and of the hopelessness of reform within the church that he took up the cause of the Puritans. He traveled abroad, became interested in education and for nearly nine years was a teacher himself, writing his famous *Tractate* during this epoch.

Under Cromwell, Milton was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State and though incapacitated by blindness during the last eight years, he held the position till the Restoration, after which though it is alleged that he was tempted by the new régime to become its advocate, he steadily refused and lived in retirement devoted to his literary labors.

Mark Pattison writes: "Milton's life is a drama in three acts. The first discovers him in the calm

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and peaceful retirement of Horton, of which *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso* and *Lycidas* are the expression. In the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets. The three great poems *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are the utterances of his final period of solitary and Promethean grandeur, when blind, destitute, friendless, he testified of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world."

He was three times married, first to a Royalist who after living with him a month, left him suddenly and returned to the gayer life of her home. This was in 1643 and Milton was much embittered by the act, writing diatribes on divorce and marriage; but subsequently he received her again to his house. When she died nine years later she left him three daughters who were much assistance to him when he became helpless. His second wife lived for a short time only but his third wife survived him.

His blindness was brought on by excessive labor for his political party though he asserts himself that he had weakened his eyes in youth by extravagant habits of night study. The affliction came upon him when he was forty-four so that for twenty-two years he was dependent upon rela-

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tives, friends, and paid assistants for all that he read or wrote. And it was not always pleasant and cheerful aid that was given him. Dismayed by the rigor of the work and weary of continuously reading to their father in a language of which they could comprehend nothing, his daughters rebelled, prompted perhaps by the irritability with which the poor old man is charged. He had lost most of his fortune, and of personal friends he had few for he was so reticent and repelling in his manner that none were attracted to him. It is in this epoch that he makes this pathetic accusation of his opponents and defense of himself: "They charge me with poverty, because I have never desired to become rich dishonestly; they accuse me of blindness, because I have lost my eyes in the service of liberty; they tax me with cowardice, and while I had the use of my eyes and my sword I never feared the boldest among them; finally, I am upbraided with deformity, while none was more handsome in the age of beauty. I do not even complain of my want of sight; in the night with which I am surrounded the light of the Divine Presence shines with a more brilliant luster."

Ralph Waldo Emerson bears this testimony to the influence exerted by Milton and his writings: "Leaving out of view the pretensions of our contemporaries (always an incalculable influence), we think no man can be named whose mind still acts

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on the cultivated intellect of England and America with an energy comparable to that of Milton. Shakespeare is a voice merely; who he was that sang, that sings, we know not. Milton stands erect, commanding, still visible as a man among men, and reads the laws of the moral sentiment to the newborn race."

## Percy Bysshe Shelley

1792-1822

Shelley lived a little less than thirty years but in that brief time he made for himself an enduring name. It was a sad life he led, a life of constant opposition to society and religion, and full of suffering for himself. He had neither sympathy nor decent treatment at his home, and at Eton, where he went at the age of twelve, he was the butt of all the heartless pranks his playmates could invent. His fiery temper and obstinate disposition placed him wholly at the mercy of his boyish tormentors. A beautiful face, charming manners when in repose and a sympathetic and generous nature that followed him through life were an endowment that should have made him beloved by everyone.

As he grew older and entered college his avowed atheism brought him the distrust of his friends, the contempt of his family, broke off his first attachment to a beautiful cousin, and finally on the publication of a pamphlet setting forth his views on the *Necessity of Atheism*, summarily expelled him from Oxford. He never learned discretion in expressing his views, but seemed possessed of a fatal facility in advocating them at the most inopportune times. There was, however, much good in his faith and in his self-sacrificing spirit. One writer says of him, "He had

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faith in the gospel of liberty, fraternity, equality ; faith in the divine beauty of nature ; faith in a love that rules the universe ; faith in the perfectability of man ; faith in the omnipresent soul, whereof our souls are atoms ; faith in affection, as the ruling and co-ordinating substance of morality.”

But in the application of his tenets he violated most of the sacred laws of home and family. His first wife, the daughter of a tavern-keeper, was sixteen, when at the age of nineteen, Shelley, the heir to a baronetcy, eloped with her. A few years sufficed to show both that they were not fitted to be happy together, and though they had one beautiful child, Shelley deserted them and united himself to Mary Godwin whom in after years he married. His first wife, driven to desperation by this desertion and her own subsequent frailty, drowned herself in the Serpentine River in London. Shelley tried to obtain his children (a second was born shortly after the separation) but the English courts refused to give them to an atheist with such reprehensible opinions on marriage.

The latter years of his life were spent in Italy where the Shelleys and several dependents lived together. In one of his yachting trips on the Mediterranean a sudden squall wrecked his boat, drowning himself, his friend and the boy with them. Their bodies were after a time cast upon the shore, but the authorities refusing to allow

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them to be removed, the poet's body was cremated in the presence of his friend Byron and others. Curiously enough his heart did not burn. His ashes were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome.

For Lord Byron, Shelley held the warmest friendship and the most ardent admiration. Their intimacy influenced both, and after the latter's death Byron wrote, "There is another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly and ignorantly and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice now when he can be no better for it."

A Captain Kennedy truthfully describes Shelley in these words, "His eyes were most expressive; his complexion beautifully fair, his features exquisitely fine, his hair was dark, and no peculiar attention to its arrangement was manifest. In person he was gentlemanlike, but inclined to stoop; his gait was decidedly not military. There was an earnestness in his manner and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed everyone. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me."

His *Ode to the West Wind* is a grand poem; *The Cloud*, a dainty piece of workmanship; *Stanzas in Dejection*, as perfect in unity of sentiment as a lyric can be; and the *Ode to a Skylark* is one of the most musical poems ever written. His longer works are noted for their polish and deli-

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cate sentiment. With so much done, regret is universal that he could not have lived to reach the maturity of his powers. But his poetry is scarcely perfect, it lacks just what Tennyson and some of the American poets have been able to give by their blameless lives. Matthew Arnold concludes an essay on Dowden's life of Shelley: "But let no one suppose that a want of humor and a self-delusion such as Shelley's have no effect upon a man's poetry. The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry no less than in life, he is a beautiful and *ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

## Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1807-1882

This is the much-loved poet of the American home, the man who had the deepest insight into those emotions which make better fathers and mothers, children, brothers and sisters. He sang of the human heart in loving tenderness; and his long life of spotless integrity, his strong desire to live right, to think right, and to teach right gave him the power to touch the hearts of his hearers. He wrote of children and for children with a wealth of affection and a keenness of understanding that compel the admiration and reverential love of his little readers. Other poets have appealed to the imagination and the intellect with greater force but no one has so touched the heart.

“Longfellow, though a man of general culture, does not write for the literary public. His relation is to the great body of readers though his personal intimacies seem to have been almost exclusively with literary or academic people. Sympathy with the broadly human is one of the marks of the true poet. To put simple things into form requires genius; for thousands try to do it every day and fail for lack of the special gift. Longfellow succeeded, and those who say that his themes and method are alike commonplace forget

## Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

that the touch which illuminates the commonplace is the most delicate in art."

Longfellow was born in 1807 and lived to be seventy-five years old, dying in the same quiet, peaceful way in which he had lived his long and earnest life. It was the life of a student and a poet, a man of deep feelings and steady purpose.

He was early possessed by a strong desire to be eminent in some line, and all his tastes led to literature. He wrote and his mother's sympathetic criticism assisted him to perfect his style and encouraged him to continue his practice. When he graduated from college he found himself driven by circumstances to undertake the study of the law, but fortunately at this juncture came an offer of the chair of Modern Languages in Bowdoin College, of which he was a graduate. It can easily be imagined that he accepted the invitation with joy, particularly as it was coupled with the privilege of three years of European study before he entered upon his duties. For five and a half years he held this position and was much beloved by the students who sat in his classes. He was witty, helpful, and sympathetic, a notable teacher. Receiving an offer of the same position at Harvard he left Bowdoin and studied abroad for eighteen months before entering upon his new duties. For eighteen years he taught in Harvard, and then resigned because he felt the burden of the daily routine and because he wished to devote

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himself more exclusively to his writings. He was succeeded by James Russell Lowell.

He was twice married, his first wife dying while she was abroad with him in 1835. His poem *Footsteps of Angels* written three years after her death is a touching tribute of his love. By his second wife he had several children whose happy faces were his greatest delight and who occupied his heart alone after the terrible calamity which deprived him of the loving companionship of their mother. She was burned to death by her clothing catching fire from a lighted match with which she had just sealed a lock of one of her children's hair. To one of Longfellow's sensitive nature his affliction came with doubled force and he never ceased to mourn her loss.

Much of his poetry was personal in its growth and came from the depths of experience through which his own heart passed. This gave to it that peculiar power by which it holds us all. *The Psalm of Life* marks his return to poetry after the death of his first wife and of it he says: "I kept it some time in manuscript, unwilling to show it to any one — it being a voice from my inmost heart of a time when I was rallying from depression." *The Bridge* is his own experience; the *Ode to a Child* was addressed to his own son Charles, and *Resignation* is the expression of his soul's deepest feeling when his baby Fanny died. Many of the subjects he selects are the common things near

## Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

himself and he was never averse to using whatever inspired his poetic thought, yet it was all so transmuted in the pure recesses of his mind that it has well been said of him as of Sir Walter Scott that he wrote no word he could wish blotted out.

It seems unnecessary to call attention to his chief and most readable poems, for no one is ignorant of *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, of *Hiawatha* and *The Spanish Student*, of the many *Tales of a Wayside Inn* in their charming setting, and the numberless lyrics which from *The Reaper and the Flowers* to his last written word have become the loved possession of every home of culture and refinement.

His own sonnet, one of the finest ever written, seems descriptive of his end:

“ As a fond mother when the day is o’er,  
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,  
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,  
And leave his broken playthings on the  
floor,  
Still gazing at them through the open door,  
Nor wholly reassured and comforted  
By promises of others in their stead,  
Which though more splendid may not please  
him more ;  
So nature deals with us, and takes away  
Our playthings, one by one, and by the hand

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Leads us to rest so gently, that we go  
Scarce knowing if we wish to stay,  
Being too full of sleep to understand  
How far the unknown transcends the what  
we know."

## Review Questions

1. Find Wordsworth's sonnet written on *Westminster Bridge* and write a description of its meter, its rhyme scheme, and compare it carefully with Milton's sonnet *On His Own Blindness*.
2. Write of *Lycidas* an analysis similar to that which in your text precedes Gray's *Elegy*.
3. Compare the ode, the sonnet, and the elegy in: (a) form and structure, (b) purpose. In which class do you find the more beautiful poems?
4. Compare the ballad on *Robin Hood* with *The Ancient Mariner*: (a) in form, (b) in purpose, (c) in power and beauty of expression.
5. What contrast can you find in character between James Russell Lowell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow?
6. Can you find in Burke's speech *On Conciliation* any passages which you would call poetic? What are the characteristics that make you so term them?
7. Compare the poems of Wordsworth with those of Milton and determine which makes the greater number of allusions to birds and flowers.
8. Compare Milton's *Lycidas* with Shelley's *Adonais* and determine which makes the greater use of his classical knowledge as shown by his mythological allusions.



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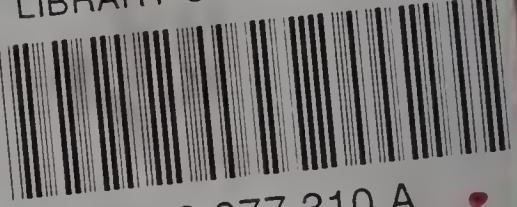
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